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WCW

Shane Helms

WORLD CHA

RESTLING

Diamond Dallas Page

**Still
Riding
High**

Buff Bagwell: Uncensored Q&A

Ms. Jones: Sizzling Photo Session

PLUS: • Rick Steiner • Dustin Rhodes • Konnan

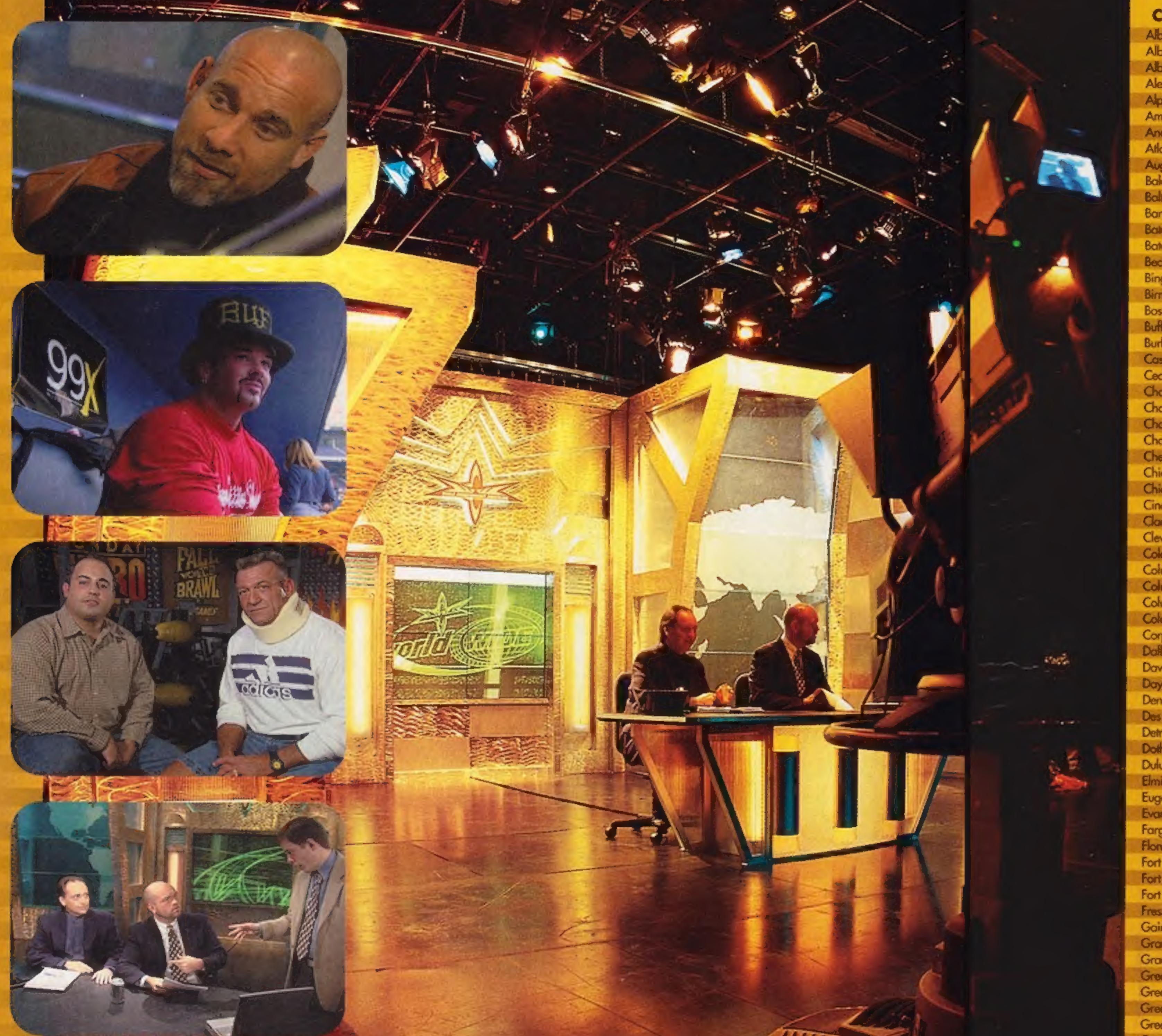
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Albuquerque, NM	KASY Saturday, 10:30 a.m.	Lima, OH	WOHL Saturday, noon
Alexandria, LA	WNTZ Saturday, 3 p.m.	Lincoln, NE	KJKN Saturday, 10:30 p.m.
Alpena, MI	WBKB Saturday, 1 a.m.	Little Rock, AR	KASN Saturday, 10 a.m.
Amarillo, TX	KCPN Saturday, 9 p.m.	Los Angeles	KTTV Saturday, noon
Anchorage, AK	KYES Saturday, midnight	Louisville, KY	WFTE Thursday, 8 p.m.
Atlanta	WHOT Saturday, 4 p.m.	Lubbock, TX	KUPT Saturday, 11 a.m.
Augusta, GA	WAGT Sunday, 11:30 p.m.	Macon, GA	WMGT Saturday, 7 p.m.
Bakersfield, CA	KUVI Saturday, 1 a.m.	Madison, WI	WISC Saturday, 9 p.m.
Baltimore	WNNUV Saturday, noon	Mason City, IA	KIMT Sunday, 4 p.m.
Bangor, ME	WCKD Saturday, noon	Memphis, TN	WUMT Saturday, 12:30 a.m.
Baton Rouge, LA	KWBJ Friday, 11 p.m.	Meridian, MS	WMDN Saturday, 10 p.m.
Baton Rouge, LA	WBBR Saturday, 8 p.m.	Miami	WSVN Sunday, 6 a.m.
Beckley/Bluefield, WV	WVSX Sunday, 11 a.m.	Milwaukee	WTW Saturday, noon
Binghamton, NY	WICZ Saturday, 4 p.m.	Minneapolis	KMSP Saturday, 11 a.m.
Birmingham, AL	WABM Saturday, noon	Minot-Bismarck, ND	KNDX Saturday, 11 p.m.
Boston	WSBK Sunday, 11 p.m.	Mobile, AL	WJTC Saturday, 3 p.m.
Buffalo, NY	WNYO Saturday, 1 p.m.	Monroe, IA	KNOE Saturday, noon
Burlington, VT	WWBI Saturday, 1 p.m.	Montgomery, AL	WCOV Saturday, 2 p.m.
Casper/Riverton, WY	KWYF Saturday, 5 p.m.	Nashville, TN	WKAG Friday, 8 p.m.
Cedar Rapids, IA	KWKD Saturday, 2 a.m.	Nashville, TN	WUXP Saturday, 11:30 a.m.
Charleston, SC	WMMP Saturday, 9 p.m.	New Orleans	WUPL Saturday, 11 a.m.
Charleston/Huntington, WV	WVAH Saturday, midnight	New York	WLNW Saturday, midnight
Charlotte, NC	WFVT Sunday, 8 a.m.	Norfolk, VA	WTWZ Saturday, 1 p.m.
Chattanooga, TN	WDNN Saturday, midnight	Oklahoma City	KOCB Saturday, 1 a.m.
Cheyenne, WY	KLWY Saturday, 4 a.m.	Omaha, NE	KPTM Sunday, 6 p.m.
Chicago	WCIU Saturday, 9 p.m.	Orlando, FL	WKCF Sunday, 1:30 a.m.
Chico/Redding, CA	KRVU Saturday, noon	Paducah, KY	KBSI Sunday, 10 a.m.
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Cleveland	WUAB Saturday, 10 a.m.	Peoria, IL	WYZZ Saturday, midnight
Colorado Springs, CO	KXTU Saturday, 10 a.m.	Philadelphia	WTWZ Friday, midnight; Sunday, 1 p.m.
Columbia, SC	WOLO Saturday, noon	Phoenix	KUTP Saturday, midnight
Columbus, GA	WLTZ Saturday, 1 a.m.	Pittsburgh	WCWB Saturday, noon
Columbus, OH	WSYX Saturday, midnight	Portland, OR	KWBP Sunday, 1 p.m.
Columbus/Tupelo, MS	WTVA Saturday, midnight	Portland/Auburn, ME	WPXT Saturday, midnight
Corpus Christi, TX	KTOV Sunday, 8 p.m.	Providence, RI	WLWC Saturday, 2 a.m.
Dallas/Fort Worth	KDFL Saturday, 7 p.m.	Raleigh, NC	WLFI Saturday, noon
Davenport, IA	WHBF Saturday, 6 p.m.	Reno, NV	KAWE Sunday, midnight
Dayton, OH	WRGT Sunday, 10 a.m.	Richmond, VA	WUPV Saturday, 11 p.m.
Denver	KCNC Saturday, 12:07 a.m.	Roanoke, VA	WSLS Saturday, 1 a.m.
Des Moines, IA	KDSM Saturday, midnight	Rochester, NY	WB26 Saturday, 7 p.m.
Detroit	WADL Thursday, 9 p.m.	Rockford, IL	WREX Sunday, 10:30 p.m.
Duluth, AL	WDHN Saturday, 12:30 a.m.	Sacramento, CA	KOVR Saturday, 11:30 p.m.
Duluth, MN	KQDS Saturday, 10 a.m.	St. Joseph, MO	KQTW Saturday, 10:30 p.m.
Elmira, NY	WYDC Saturday, midnight	Salt Lake City	KUWB Sunday, 11 a.m.
Eugene, OR	KEVU Saturday, 1 p.m.	San Antonio	KABB Saturday, midnight
Evansville, IN	WWAZ Saturday, 4 p.m.	San Diego	XUPN Sunday, 2 p.m. and midnight
Fargo Valley, ND	KXJB Saturday, 11 a.m.	San Francisco	KBHK Saturday, 1 a.m.
Florence, SC	WWMB Saturday, 11 a.m.	Santa Barbara, CA	KADY Sunday, 11:30 p.m.
Fort Myers, FL	WEVU Saturday, 3 p.m.	Savannah, GA	WTGS Sunday, 11 a.m.
Fort Smith, AK	KFDF Saturday, 3 p.m.	Seattle	KONG Sunday, 8 p.m.
Fort Wayne, IN	WFFT Sunday, 1 a.m.	Shreveport, LA	KTBS Sunday, 11:37 p.m.
Fresno, CA	KAIL Saturday, 10 a.m.	Sioux City, IA	KMEG Saturday, 11:30 p.m.
Gainesville, FL	WGFL Saturday, 12:30 a.m.	Sioux Falls, SD	KTWB Saturday, 11 a.m.
Grand Junction, CO	KKCO Saturday, 10 p.m.	South Bend, IN	WMWB Sunday, 5 a.m.
Grand Rapids, MI	WXSP Saturday, 9 p.m.	Spokane, WA	KAYU Saturday, noon
Green Bay, WI	WIWB Sunday, 11 a.m.	Springfield, MO	KCZ Saturday, 2:30 p.m.
Greensboro, NC	WUPN Saturday, 11 a.m.	Springfield/Champaign, IL	WBUI Saturday, 11 a.m.
Greenville, SC	WASV Saturday, 11 a.m.	Syracuse, NY	WNYS Saturday, 10 a.m.
Greenville/New Bern, NC	WCTI Saturday, 6 p.m.	Tallahassee, NY	WCTV Saturday, 6 a.m.
Greenwood, MS	WABG Saturday, 1:05 a.m.	Tampa, FL	WMOR Saturday, 9 p.m.
Harlingen, TX	XHFOX Saturday, midnight	Terre Haute, IN	WNOI Sunday, 5 p.m.
Harrisburg, PA	WLYH Saturday, midnight	Toledo, OH	WTW5 Saturday, 1 a.m.
Hartford, CT	WTXX Sunday, noon	Topeka, KS	KTMJ Saturday, 4 p.m.
Houston	KNWS Saturday, 10 p.m.; Sunday, 10 p.m.	Tri-Cities, WA	WKPT Saturday, 11 p.m.
Huntsville, AL	WYTHE Thursday, 7 p.m.	Tucson, AZ	KWBA Saturday, 11 a.m.
Indianapolis	WTIV Sunday, 9 a.m.	Tulsa, OK	KWBT Sunday, noon
Jackson, MS	WDBD Saturday, 6 a.m.	Tyler, TX	KLPN Saturday, 11 a.m.
Jackson, TN	WMTU Saturday, 12:30 a.m.	Waco/Temple, TX	KWKT Saturday, midnight
Jacksonville, FL	WJWB Sunday, 11:30 a.m.	Washington, D.C.	WBDC Sunday, 10 a.m.
Kansas City, MO	KCWE Saturday, 2 p.m.	West Palm Beach, FL	WTWZ Sunday, 1 a.m.
Knoxville, TN	WTNZ Saturday, 6 p.m.	Wichita, KS	KWCH Sunday, midnight
La Crosse, WI	KQEG Friday, 9 p.m.	Wilkes-Barre, PA	WSWB Saturday, 7 p.m.
Lafayette, LA	KLAF Saturday, 10 a.m.	Yakima, WA	KCYU Saturday, 11:30 a.m.
Laredo, TX	KGNS Saturday, midnight	Youngstown, OH	WYFX Sunday, 10 a.m.
Lansing, MI	WLAJ Sunday, noon		

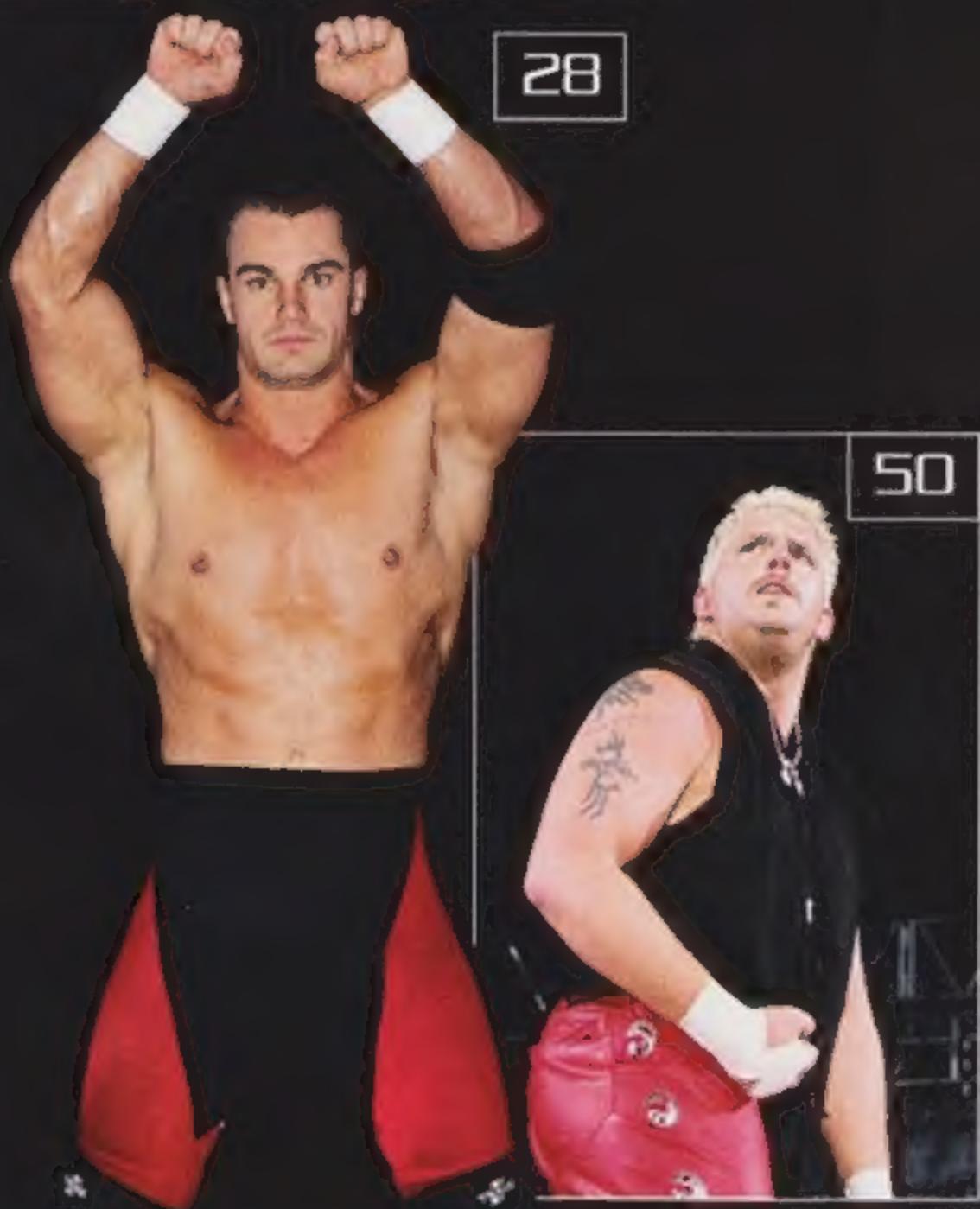
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Contents



Free Posters

Uncensored: Buff Bagwell

A question-and-answer session with one half of Totally Buffed.

Deconstructing Lance Storm

A piece-by-piece look at the man from Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

Unleashed

Back from a sabbatical, Rick Steiner is focused on a singles career and hungry for competition.

The Natural

Since cruiserweight sensation "Sugar" Shane Helms was 13 years old, it was obvious he was destined for wrestling stardom.

Cover Story

Leader of the Pack

Diamond Dallas Page continues to blaze his own path both in and out of the ring.

Rising Son

Finally at peace with himself and his legendary father, Dustin Rhodes is poised to achieve his destiny.

End Game

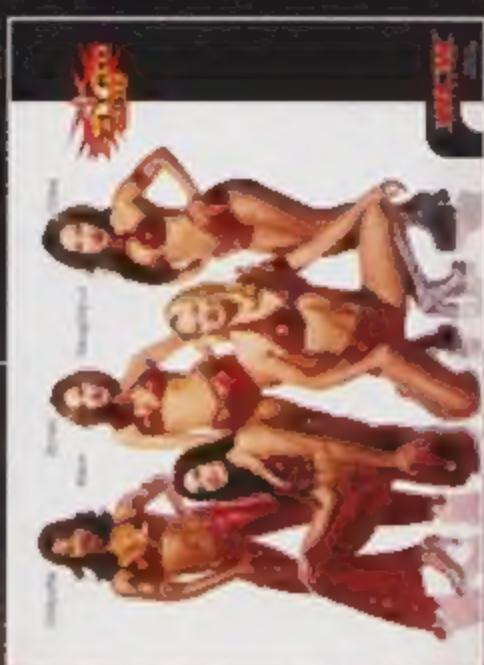
A distinct finishing move is one of the key ingredients to becoming a success in sports entertainment.

Keeping it Real

Konnan's love of rap music and his aspirations as a performer are anything but a gimmick.

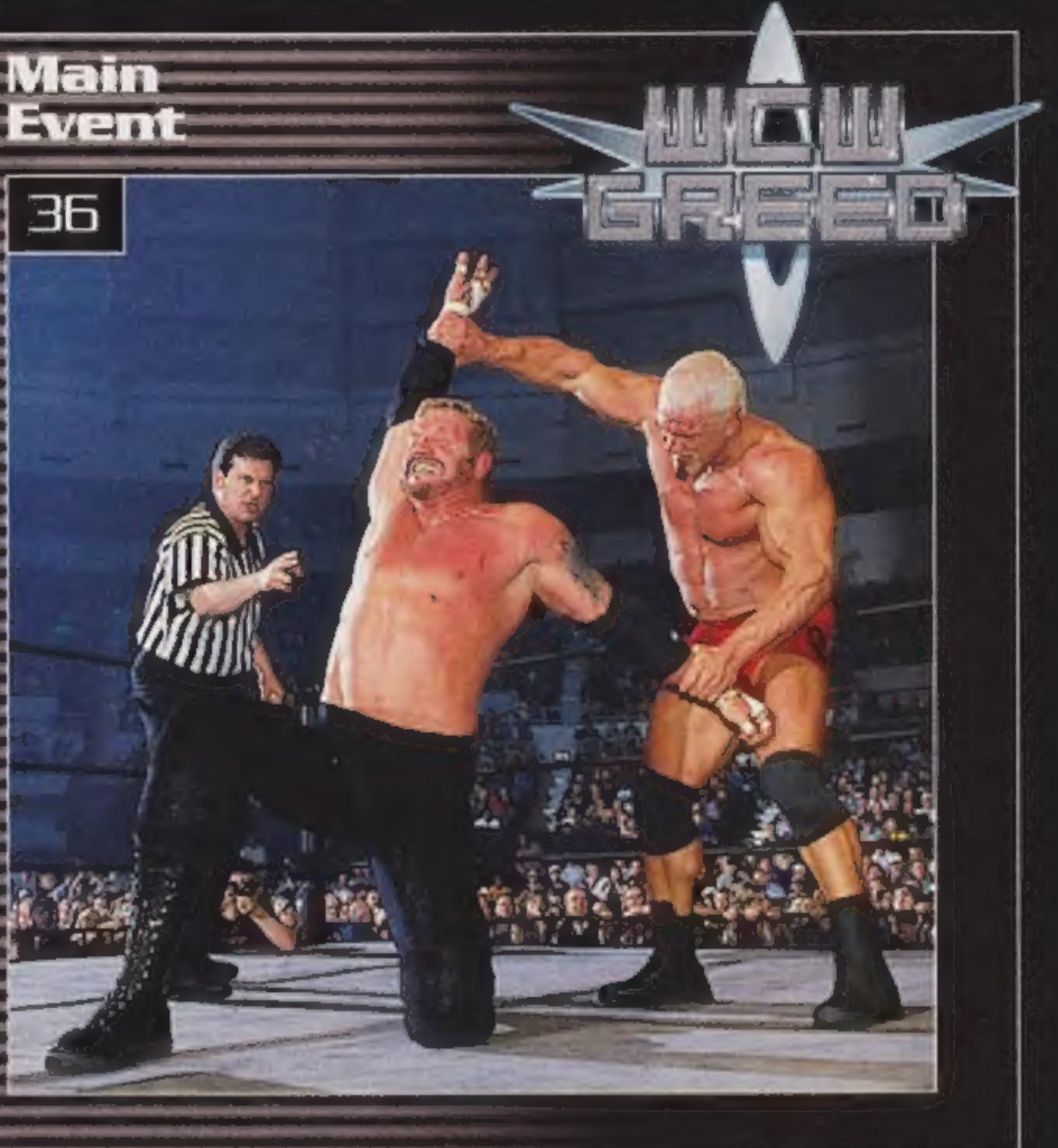
A Touch of Class

Carmel Macklin, a.k.a. Ms. Jones, proves that confidence and integrity can be quite attractive.



Main Event

36



Departments

8 Letters

10 Eck's Files

By Kevin Eck

12 Behind the Curtain

By Ed Ferrara

16 Rope Dope

74 Two Questions

76 Nitro Air Waves

By Tony Schiavone and Scott Hudson

78 Straight Shooter

By Stevie Ray

80 The Professor

By Mike Tenay

82 Jaw Jacking

By Madusa

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Publisher/Editor-in-Chief	Ken Leiker
Editor	Kevin Eck
Art Director	Michael Falco
Associate Editor	Graham Boain
Photo Editor	Joseph M. Murphy
Chief Photographer	Scott Cunningham
Production Coordinator	Elliot Leson
Staff Writer	Chad Damiani
Special Contributors	Ed Ferrara Scott Hudson Madusa Stevie Ray Tony Schiavone Mike Tenay

Contributing Photographers

Administrative Assistant

Executive Publisher	Jerry L. Croft
Circulation Manager	Greg Wolfe
Advertising Sales	Michael Weinstein 949-830-6565 949-830-3995 (fax) Michael Korman 212-852-6708 212-596-6363 (fax)
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World Championship Wrestling, Inc.

VP-Marketing	Aaron Blitzstein
VP-Syndication Ad Sales	Rob Garner
VP-Arenas/Merchandise	Gary Juster
VP-Int'l Development	Sharon Sidello

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Tony Schiavone does a great job announcing. He seems excited about all the matches, even the ones that might not be that exciting. He seems to love wrestling and genuinely cares about the wrestlers, and I think that matters.

Cheryl Coen

Via e-mail

As a devoted WCW fan, I think the Nitro Girls should be back on television. Sometimes we get a five-second look at them or see them in WCW MAGAZINE, but for male fans of the Nitro Girls, the coverage could be better. I am a big Chae fan and I would love to see more of her.

Andre C. Stevenson, Jr.

Suffolk, VA

Could you guys please write an article on Billy Kidman? I think he is the best cruiserweight WCW has. WCW, please don't let Kidman leave—he is an asset to the company. I really think he should get another cruiserweight title shot, because he would win.

Joe Filippone

Golden, CO

I just read Ed Ferrara's column (Behind the Curtain, April 2001). I thought it was a great article and it really hit home for me as a wrestling fan. I agree with his opinion that maybe we use really great surprises and shocks too often in wrestling these days. I remember when we would see surprises on a wrestling show every once in a while and it would really stick out in our minds as something spectacular. Now it's just not the same. I also can relate to his story of staying up late at night to see the wrestling shows on television. I used to stay up really late just to watch that one hour of wrestling on television—but it was worth the wait and the loss of sleep. In closing, I would like to say that Ed and the rest of the

writers and wrestlers in WCW are doing a great job.

Dustin Uhrich

Via e-mail

The article in WCW MAGAZINE that got my attention was about Kevin Nash and Diamond Dallas Page ("Inside Information," March 2001). I'm glad to see Page and Nash take an interest in training the newcomers. That deserves a lot of respect and I applaud these two for their work.

Kenneth Yunus

Bulls Gap, TN

When Jeff Jarrett imitated Dusty Rhodes on Nitro, he once again proved why he is the "Chosen One." Though it wasn't Jeff's first impersonation, it is by far his best. As a Luchador, he was good; as the '80s Sting, he was amazing; as Rhodes, he was brilliant. There has never been any question that Jeff is a first-rate wrestler. However, with his other antics in the ring, Jeff has proven he also is a top-rate entertainer.

Maria Ramirez

San Francisco

I love the Filthy Animals. I'm not Hispanic and I don't come from the streets, but I look up to them. The way Rey Mysterio Jr. broke into wrestling is just amazing. Hardly any wrestlers get into the business at 15 years old. Rey and Konnan, keep up the good work, and Rey, you are hot! Filthy Animals forever!

Ashley Bird

Kalamazoo, MI

I have been watching wrestling since I was 4 years old, and I think it is terrible the way Ric Flair is running



ALLEN KEE

Kidman: Pointing toward another run as cruiserweight champion?

things. Goldberg was railroaded and so was Kevin Nash. I like both of them, and they were the only reasons I was still watching wrestling. However, I am very glad to see Diamond Dallas Page back. I hope he can hang in there against Flair's evil ways.

Brandi Hudson

Nashville, TN

I think Sean O'Haire is awesome. He is the most talented wrestler in WCW. O'Haire is like a younger version of Goldberg and he has a dangerous and insane look. My friends and I think he is the most exciting and pumped-up wrestler ever. If WCW is smart, they will make O'Haire a main-event player and give him the world title because in real life, he could destroy all of the WCW wrestlers with his fighting skills.

Nate Plummer

Howards Grove, WI

Mail letters to:

Letters to the Editor

WCW MAGAZINE

PO Box 724808

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Rookie Year Produces Big-League Moments



By Kevin Eck

It's been a year since I left the Baltimore Sun to become the editor of WCW MAGAZINE. So, with the first year in the books, it's time to reflect on a few of my memorable experiences in WCW. Unfortunately, some of the best stories cannot be told in this forum—I'll save those for my memoirs.

Let's start at the beginning. I had been on the job only about a week when I attended the "Ready To Rumble" premiere in Hollywood. There I was, rubbing elbows with big movie stars. Well, maybe that's a stretch. Does David Arquette count?

Little did I know that Arquette, good old Dewey from the "Scream" movies, would be the WCW world champion a few weeks later. Although the wrestling purist in me was mortified at the sight of Mr. Courtney Cox carrying the belt that had been worn by men like Ric Flair, Harley Race and Lou Thesz, Arquette actually was too nice of a guy to dislike.

I had an opportunity to chat with Arquette at the hotel bar the night he "won" the title. It was a surreal scene: There was Arquette, the newly crowned champ, buying drinks for a packed bar as fans congratulated him. Although he was in a festive mood, he also seemed a bit embarrassed. He asked me to name some of the top guys in WCW who had never held the title. When I informed him that superstars like Scott Steiner and Booker T. were on that list (at the time), I think he realized how meaningful the belt truly is.

Speaking of superstars, the subject of my first in-depth interview was Hulk Hogan. Prior to coming to WCW, I had interviewed major league baseball and NFL players, as well as some of the top names in professional wrestling, so I'm not easily intimidated. But now we are talking about the biggest star in sports entertainment history, not to mention one of my boyhood idols.

I have to admit I was slightly nervous as Hogan welcomed me into his private dressing room and shut the door behind us. There

turned out to be no cause for concern. Hogan answered every question—even the tough ones—without hesitation, and was more accommodating and generous with his time than someone in his position had to be. It ended up being not only one of the highlights of my time in WCW, but of my career.

Here's a brief look at a few other noteworthy moments of the past year:

Walking around Los Angeles with Vampiro for a story I wrote about his troubled past. We revisited his old haunts, including the streets where he used to sleep when he was homeless a decade ago. It's amazing that he was able to survive life on the streets and become a successful wrestler, husband and father. ... Attending a photo shoot with Steiner, Midajah and two of his other freaks at Main Event Fitness in Atlanta. To insure that we wouldn't disrupt the business, the shoot began after the gym closed. We finished up around 3 a.m. Then I came home to a concerned wife, who was curious as to what I was doing with Steiner and his girls all that time. ...

Sitting down for an interview with Booker T. the day after he won the WCW world title for the first time. Some guys may not take the title all that seriously, but I could hear the emotion in his voice and see it on his face as Booker talked about how much it meant to him to reach the pinnacle of this business. ... Spending an afternoon with The Cat and his mama for a photo session at his home. The Cat kept us laughing all day. When it was time to leave, he shook our hands, thanked us, wished us well and then said: "Now get all of your asses the hell out of my house."

I've had so many other significant experiences over the past 365 days that there isn't nearly enough space to do them justice. And no matter what happens in the future, I'll always savor those 12 months. ♦

The Cat shook our hands, thanked us, wished us well and then said: 'Now get all of your asses the hell out of my house.'

Contact Kevin Eck by e-mail at ecksfiles@turner.com



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Predictions, Commendations and Condemnations



By Ed Ferrara

When I sat down to write this month's column, I began wracking my brain to find a way to talk about something meaningful and topical. The problem is that we're in a period of uncertainty. So, unless I feel like breaking out the tea leaves, shuffling the tarot deck or even reading the bumps on Bill Banks' head, there's no way I can predict what will be current and topical by the time you read this.

So, here's my column, written in the broadest strokes and going out on the fewest limbs possible:

"Hey! Things are great ... and they're only gonna get better. That's all for this month—Snoogans!"

Well, that was hardly satisfying or informative. But, truth be told, the only thing that's certain is just that. Things right now are better in WCW than I can remember since I first "defected" in October, 1999. We have a sense of direction and purpose. We also have many major changes planned that will bring us closer to our ultimate goal—which is, of course, absolute and total dominion over all of Western Civilization. We've even started constructing a huge laser that will be capable of destroying the sun, plunging the entire solar system into perpetual night and freezing all forms of life on our planet in the blink of an eye, should our wishes not be satisfactorily complied with by the planet's governmental leader.

But, to quote Hugh Morris, I digress.

Where was I? Oh, yeah—changes. We've already instituted a few, but in a very slow and gradual manner. But believe me when I say

this: you ain't seen nothin' yet, folks. Once we pull the trigger, the changes and improvements are going to be so eye-catching, huge and immediate—on such a large scale and with such impact—you're not going to be able to look away.

We're getting all of our ducks in a row, taking our time and making things right so that when the time comes, you will notice the change. Rome wasn't built in a day, you know. And I assure you—like Paul Masson, who would serve no wine before its time—we at WCW won't have the "Big Night" until the time is right. (Ugh, I just spent about 10 minutes coming up with that little "gem."

Talk about your diminishing return.)

Once we pull the trigger, the changes and improvements are going to be so eye-catching, huge and immediate, you're not going to be able to look away.

Morale. It's such an important concept. When you've got a locker room full of guys who go out there and risk their physical well-being night after night, it's important that they feel good about what they're doing. When morale is up, everyone puts forth that extra effort. I believe that over the past few months, morale has been way up across the board behind the scenes, and it definitely shows in the product.

We've got guys going out there and busting their asses every night because they care. For them, "good enough" isn't good enough. Yeah, you can say, "But that's their job. That's what they're supposed to do." And, in a way, you'd be right. But if you watched two matches back-to-back, one featuring guys who are simply "doing their jobs," and the other featuring guys who are going those extra nine yards, I guarantee you'd notice the difference. One you would enjoy, and the other you'd for-

get as soon as the final bell rang.

It's those guys who are busting their asses that make all the difference in the world. They provide the excitement for you, and they deserve kudos for their efforts. Morale is contagious, whether it be high or low. Lately, we've seen an epidemic of positive morale backstage, and if things keep going the way they're going, there just may be no cure for it.

• • •

Not to make any enemies here, but I have to comment on something on the Internet that was pointed out to me by a friend a few months back. During the Baltimore Nitro in January, when Dusty Rhodes made his huge return to WCW, someone (who apparently was commenting on the show as he was watching it) wrote about the Dusty segment: "I am being entertained ... and not enjoying it." Allow me to offer my most insincere, belated apologies to the author for giving him something to keep him from fashionably bashing everything we do. My apology goes something like this (and it comes straight from the heart in the warmest and fuzziest way): Bite me, Lumpy.

So many people (especially the Internet "smarts") are so hypercritical nowadays, it truly boggles my mind why some of them still watch at all. If you get no satisfaction from something, what's the point? Unless, of course, you solely derive your enjoyment by criticizing, trying to appear clever and encouraging others to feel the same way. I'm not saying there isn't room for criticism—that's how a product evolves and improves. I'm just saying that so often much of the criticism out there is no longer based on a case-by-case analysis of the product; it's shaped and formed by an overall attitude towards the product.

If you sit down to watch a movie or a TV show and say to yourself, "Well, this is gonna suck," then it is gonna suck (for you, at least). And I won't even get into the issue of what kind of life—or lack thereof—one must have to waste time on something they are sure they're not going to enjoy. If I see a trailer for a movie and I end up thinking the movie is going to be bad, do you think I'll waste my time and \$8.50 going to see the damned thing? Nope. I'll find something else to do. Staggering concept, isn't it?

Try it sometime, Lumpy. Sure, you might not be able to impress others with how clever you are at tearing down something a lot of people pour their blood, sweat and tears into on a daily basis, but maybe you'll free up enough time to actually go out and do something worthwhile with your life.

• • •

So, in closing, allow me to say this:

"Hey! Things are great ... and they're only gonna get better. That's all for this month—Snoogans!" ♦

*Ed Ferrara is the head writer for Nitro and Thunder.
Contact Ed by e-mail
at ferrara@turner.com*



Lyrical Helms Has the Write Stuff

From coming up with clever names for his signature moves to designing his website, "Sugar" Shane Helms likes to take an active role in every aspect of his career. So when he needed new entrance music after breaking away from 3 Count, Helms decided to write the song himself.

It took Helms all of 10 minutes to write the lyrics to "VerteBreaker," the song



named after his finishing move. Helms then told Jimmy Hart what he wanted the song to sound like, and the legendary wrestling manager and music guru called on rap group Boys With The Bass to record it.

"I wanted it to sound like 'Shimmy Shimmy Ya' by Ol' Dirty Bastard," says Helms, who wanted to sing the song but was unable to because of time constraints.

"The main thing I want is that as soon as the song hits, people know I'm coming."

To add some sizzle to the entrance, the Nitro Girls accompany Helms in a dance routine on the stage—

and that was his idea, too.

For those wishing to sing along with "VerteBreaker," here are the words:

*Now I'm the original k-d
Started back in '91 in the state of N.C.
Came up hard with dues I paid
Now Helms invades with a funky tirade
Try-to-bes take notice, Sugar Shane has arrived
To 'plex all opponents right up in their backside
Aim high like the sky with the skills to imply
Helms will survive while them other fools die*

Chorus

*VerteBreaker (Will break your spine)
VerteBreaker (Does the trick every time)*

*So don't go to sleep, cause Sugar Shane creeps
To hit you with the Nightmare on Helms Street
Solo at last, the hit that won't miss
Planting the Sugar Smack right on your lips
All-out pops, non-stop to you drop
Make you say pretty please with Sugar on top*

Repeat chorus

Not Always Smooth Sailing

Although it may seem as if limousine driver/wrestler Smooth just arrived on the scene in WCW during the past year, Harold Hogue, the man who portrays the suave, tough-as-nails character, actually has been with WCW for nine years.

Hogue debuted in WCW in the early 1990s as Ice Train. According to Hogue, the Ice Train character ultimately failed because of his immaturity and inexperience in the wrestling business. "I was not ready," says Hogue, who was a powerlifter and had a brief stint in the NFL before joining WCW. "Mentally, I didn't make the transition."

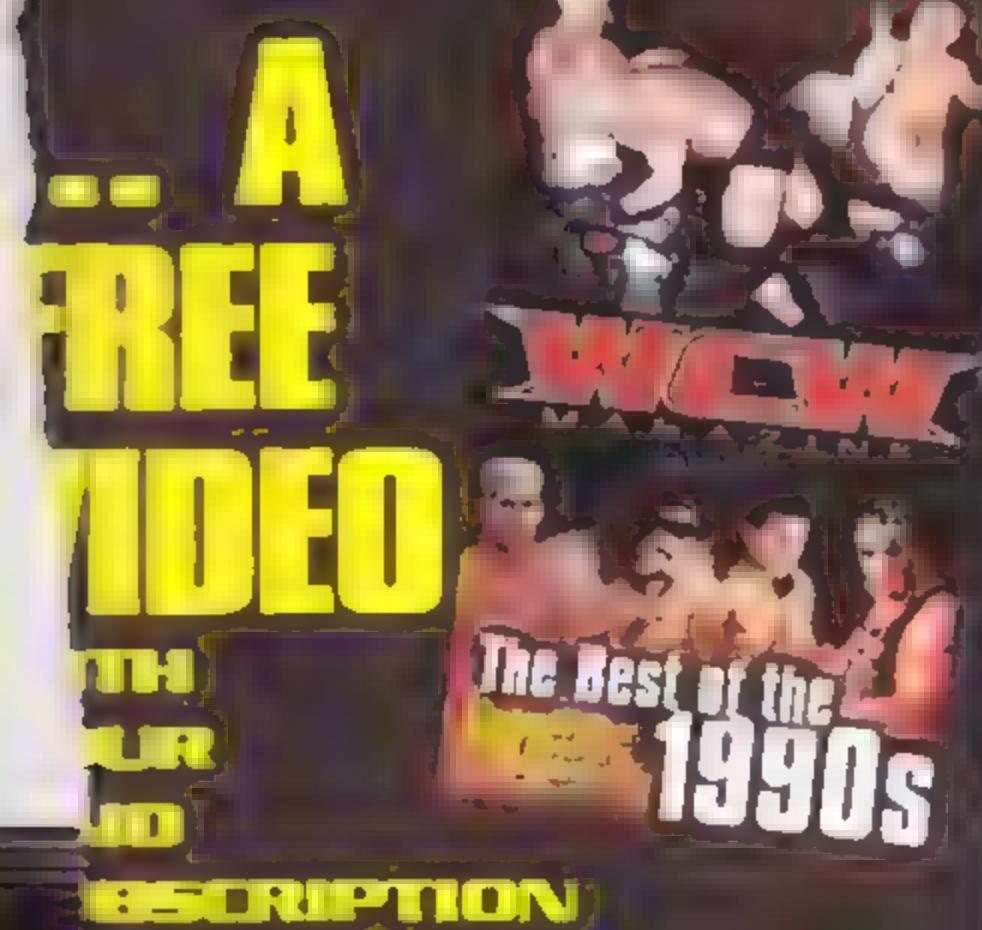
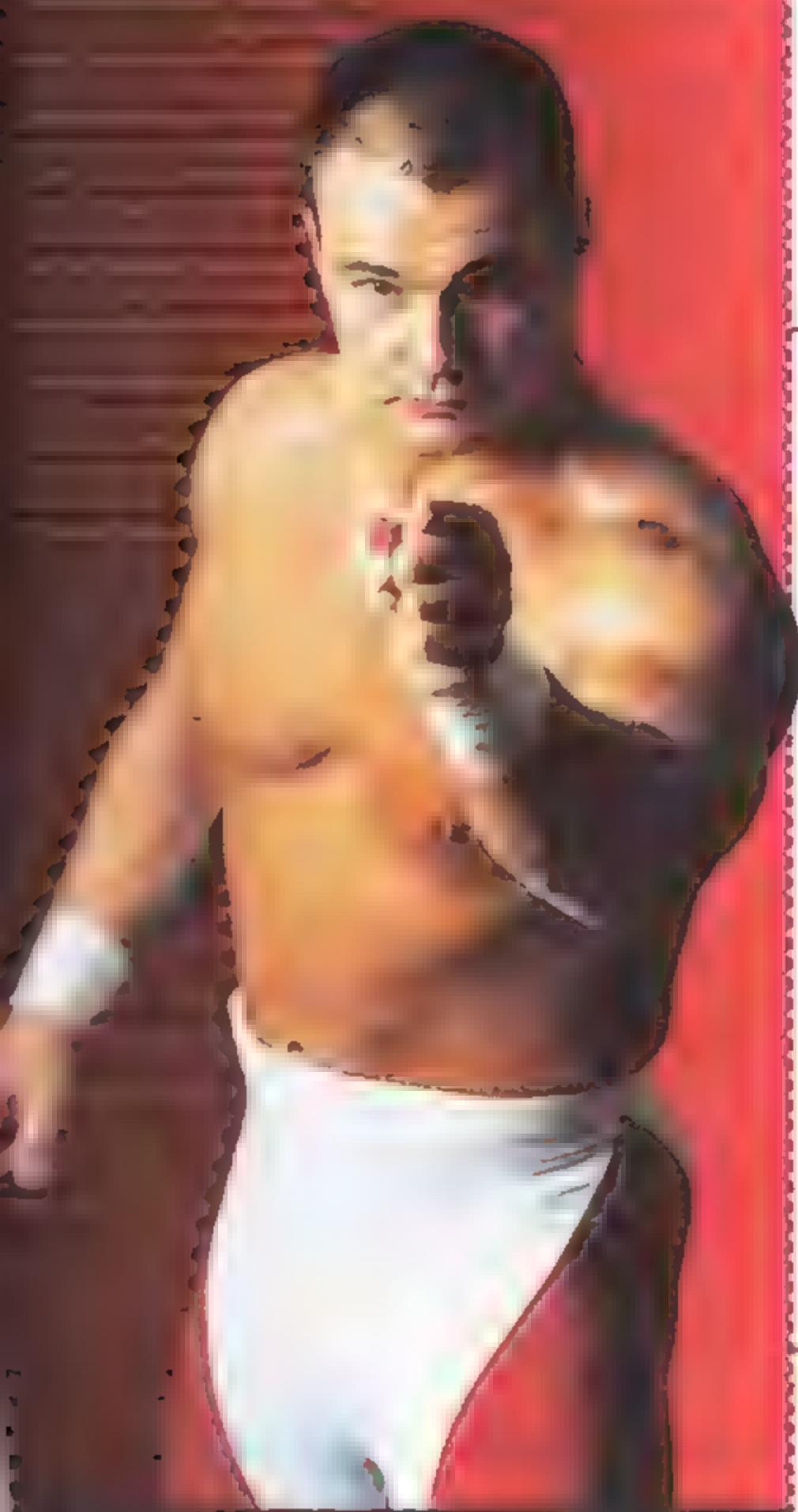
After his run ended as Ice Train—which included a short-lived tag team

with Scott Norton known as Fire and Ice—Hogue struggled to find a gimmick that would stick, all the while training, learning the business and staying patient. "I sat at home collecting a check, but I was bitter," he says. "WCW director of talent management J.J. Dillon just told me to be ready when they called again."

That call finally came when the creative team came up with Smooth, initially known as M.I. Smooth. Now 34 with a wife and three kids, Hogue is positioned for the best run of his career. "I am a 300-pound man who can leapfrog, dropkick and move in the ring," he says. "When my time comes, I am going to be ready."



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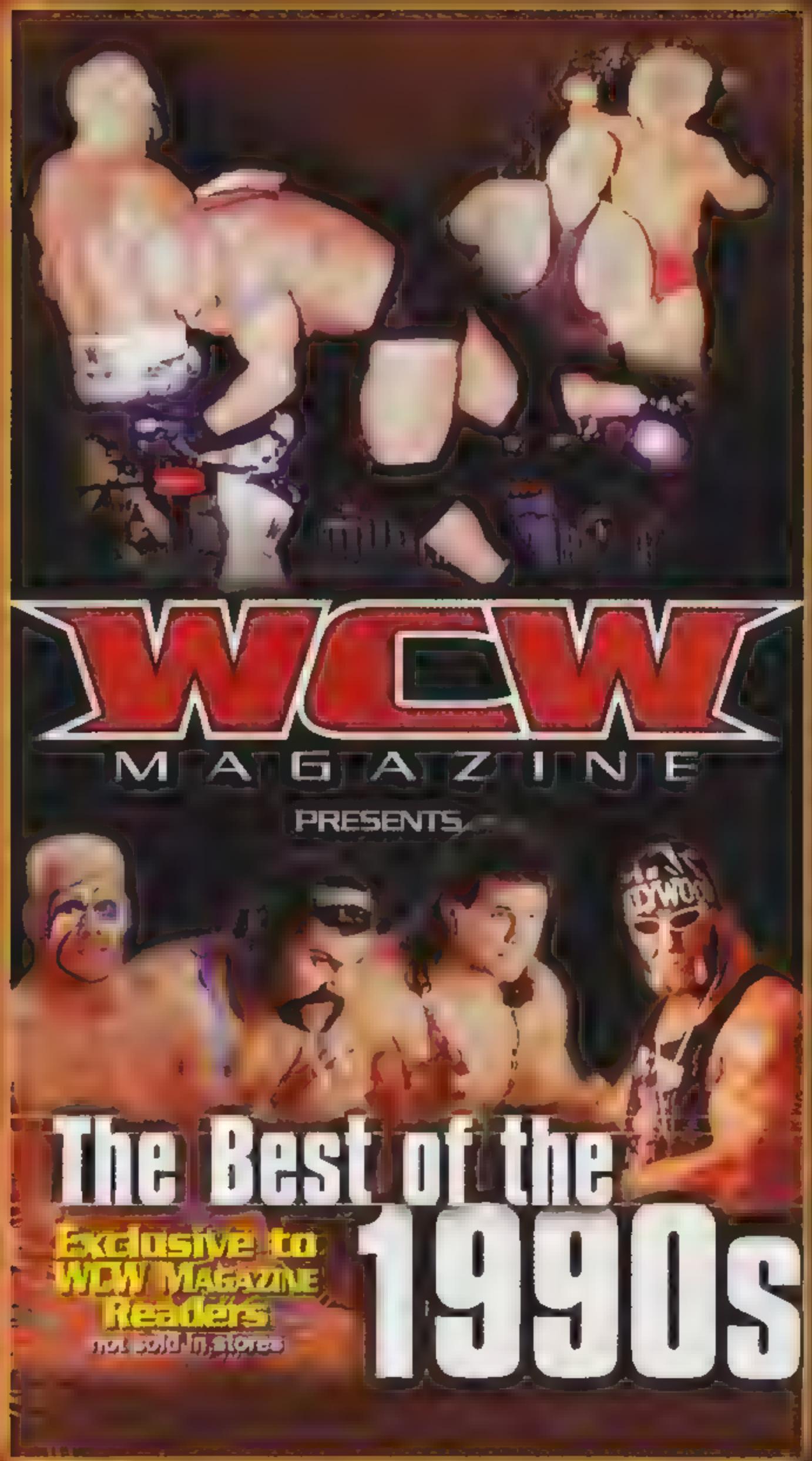
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Site Seeing

A look at
Hugh Morris'
generalrectionusa.com



Debut: November 2000

What you can find at the site:

known as General Rection. The site also features a photo gallery of Morris, who is one of the top five wrestlers in WCW.

How much time Morris spends working on the site: "We just try

interaction with fans. I try and spend as much time on it as I can when I am active."

Morris' favorite part of the site: "It's great to see people from all over the world. It's like family to me."

How much e-mail Morris gets: "I get about 100 e-mails a day from them. Sometimes it's more than I can handle. I've been doing this for so long—the last six years, so I dig doing it."

How the site is doing: "The last few months we've had about 100,000 hits per month."

Strictly Personal



We asked Kanyon his view on the following personalities:

WCW Legend Tremendous talent; innovator; loves the business

WCW Legend Very creative; funny guy; big nose

WCW Legend Great potential, but not ready for the spot he's in now

WCW Legend It took tremendous heart to come back from his neck injury

WCW Legend Very entertaining

WCW Legend One of the best I've ever been in the ring with; a past and future world heavyweight champion

Styles, Paris Unite in WCW

With the advent of the cruiserweight tag-team division, a number of new faces have been appearing on WCW television. Talented high flyers A.J. Styles (below, left) and Air Paris are two of those newcomers.

Styles (real name Allen Jones) and Paris (real name Frank Parris), were discovered by WCW talent agent Terry Taylor while feuding with each other in NWA Wildside, a Georgia-based promo-

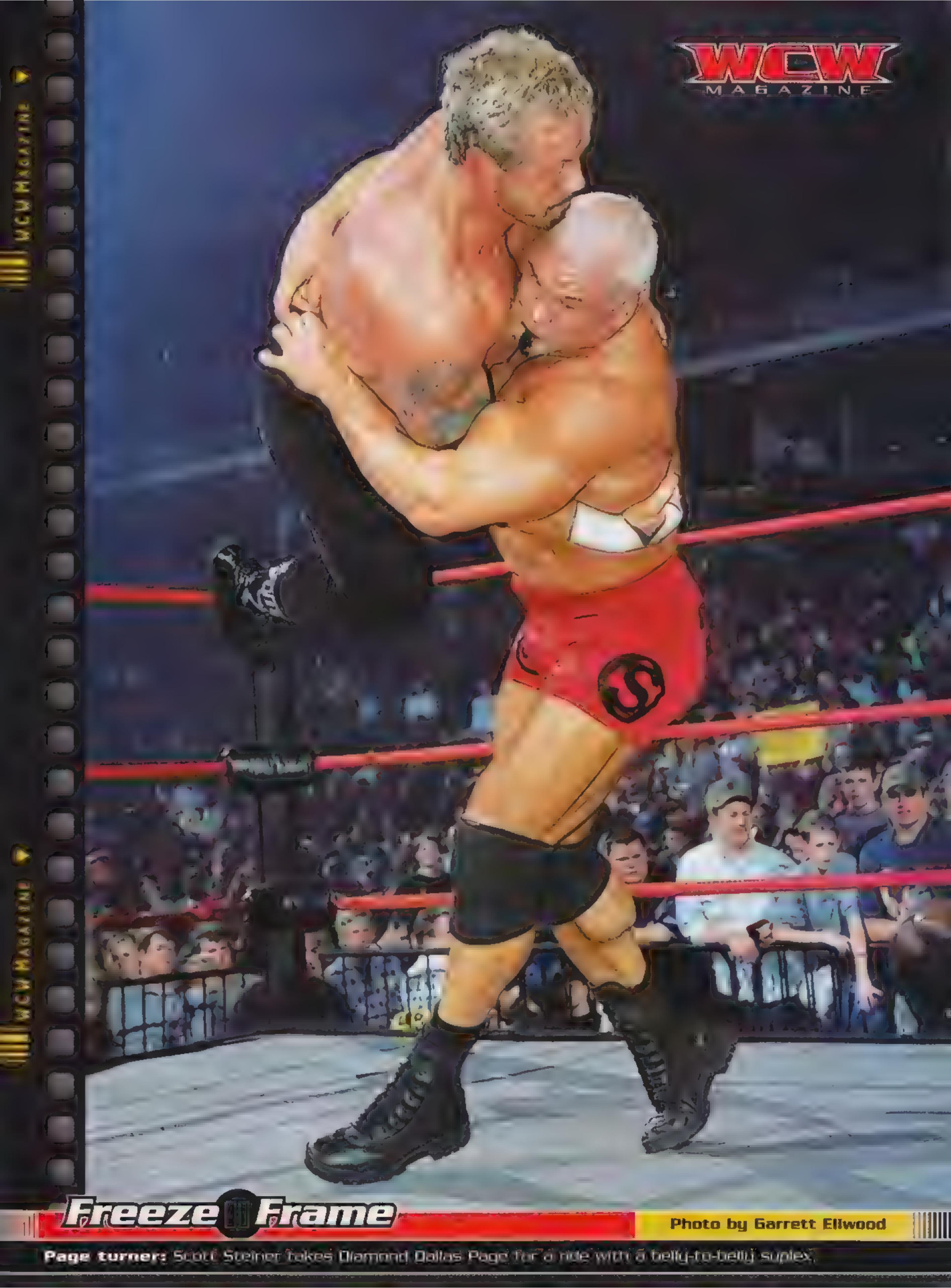
tion. They auditioned for WCW in a non-televised match and were offered three-year contracts. "I am willing to do whatever it takes to take it to the next level," Styles says. "I'm here, so I am going to make the best of it and get noticed."

Paris started his wrestling career at 14 in an independent promotion in front of "about 10 people, and four of them were family." Before heading to Wildside, where he spent almost nine months, Paris wrestled for NWA Nashville, where he met Taylor. On what differentiates him from other cruiserweights, Paris says:

"I like to take sick bumps—nasty, reckless stuff."

Although they got noticed feuding with each other, Styles, 24, and Paris, 23, are confident they can be a successful team. "We've wrestled against each other so long that we know each other's moves," Styles says. "We just have to combine our stuff to showcase our talent."



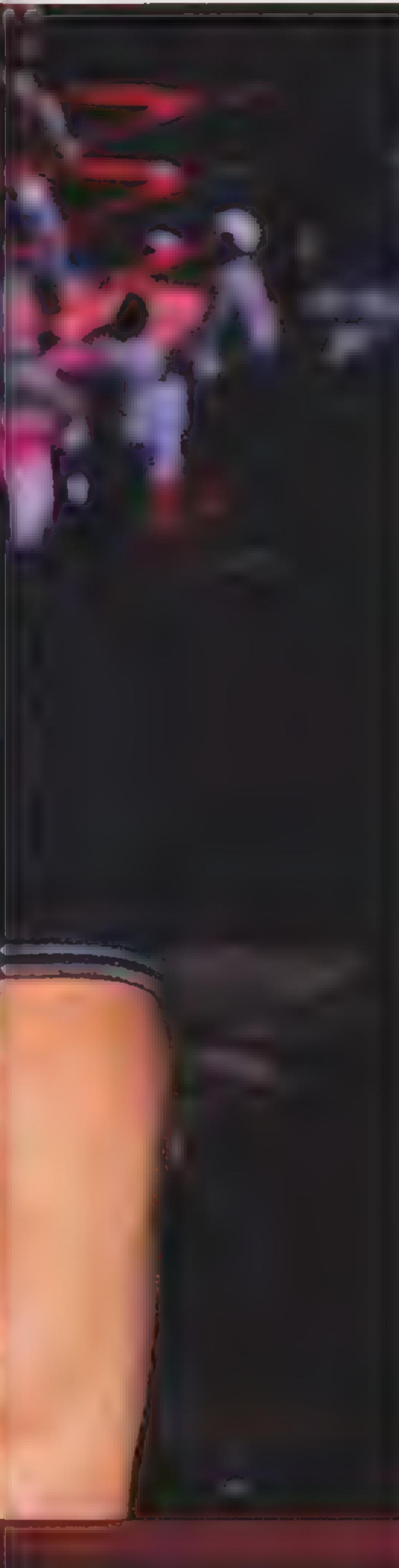


Freeze Frame

Page turners: Scott Steiner takes Diamond Dallas Page for a ride with a belly-to-belly suplex.

Photo by Garrett Ellwood

UNCENSORED
Q&A



Buff Bagwell

By Kevin Eck
Photography by Scott Cunningham

Marcus "Buff" Bagwell has been a fixture in WCW for nearly a decade—only Sting has been with the company longer. Bagwell was a fresh-faced 21-year-old when he joined WCW in 1991, and with his handsome features and chiseled physique, he quickly was touted as a future superstar.

Bagwell, the 1991 WCW Rookie of the Year, steadily worked his way up the card, winning tag-team titles with various partners. His big break occurred in late 1996 when soft-spoken babyface Marcus Bagwell joined the nWo and transformed into ultra-cocky heel Buff Bagwell.

His momentum, however, came to a screeching halt in 1998. On the receiving end of a top-rope bulldog by Rick Steiner during a match on a live Thunder broadcast, Bagwell landed awkwardly and suffered four broken cervical bones in his neck. After surviving two close calls in the hospital as the result of complications from three surgeries, and being told by doctors that his wrestling career was over, Bagwell returned to action 10 months later.

Since returning, Bagwell has become somewhat of a controversial figure. Creative differences with then-booker Vince Russo prompted Bagwell to publicly voice his dissatisfaction with the company, which resulted in him being taken off television for several months in 2000 as punishment. Although the storyline that would elevate Bagwell to main-event status continues to elude him, Bagwell—currently one-half of *Totally Buffed* with Lex Luger—always has been “over” with the fans.

In an interview with WCW MAGAZINE, Bagwell talked about his career frustrations, the perception that he's difficult backstage, and his friendship with Luger and Sting.

Question: How frustrating was the past year for you?

Answer: Very frustrating. I don't want to blame anybody because it's just the nature of the business. Even though I want to blame Vince Russo, I'm not going to, because he had a plan to do something—I'm not quite sure what—and I was not figured into the plan. That

was very frustrating for me when I knew that I could be a star if they'd let me. I could have been a talent that they used. Sitting at home and seeing that was real frustrating. I'm very competitive and I want to be involved. To not be involved when I saw guys out there that I know are not stars and never will be stars was tough. It was really frustrating for every-

body, not just for me. Morale was really down. When Eric Bischoff came back, he put the stars back on TV. And what do you know, our ratings went up. When Eric came back, it really changed a lot of things, and hopefully this year will be a lot better year.

Q: Most experts and fans agree that you have the look, talent and charisma to be a main-event player in WCW. Why do you think it hasn't happened?

A: I can't answer that. For a long time the answer was: "He's young. He'll be here. We're not going to lose him. Let's just keep him dangling." Well, that kind of ran out, and then I finally started asking questions, and that's when I got all the heat. They wanted to know why Buff was being so mean. But they don't know what Buff went through. They didn't know Buff back in 1991 at Center Stage (in Atlanta, site of WCW TV tapings at the time). Now, these kids come in doing Nitros and Thunders thinking they're stars, not knowing what Buff and the rest of the people did to keep this boat afloat. Even when I was off TV, they still ran my commercial. As far as the push that I needed or deserved, I'm just not real sure. I want to say words like "jealousy." I want to say words like "my attitude." Words like "me and Russo didn't get along." But then again, even when Eric was here, it was kind of the same deal. Timing is everything. I don't blame anybody. I don't blame Russo. I don't blame Eric, of course—Eric and I are great friends. It's just when you've got that

much talent facing you, you go down the roster and look at the ages of the guys and you go, "Well, this guy can wait. Let's use these guys and build this guy later on." To answer your question, I think my age was my worst enemy. But in the end, my age will be my ace in the hole.

Q: People have been talking about your potential for almost 10 years. Do you ever get tired of hearing the "P" word?

A: No, not really. I've heard it so much it's just like water off my back. I know I have potential, and I don't mean that in a cocky sense. Just watch our show. It's real simple: When you walk through the curtain, if you can get applause or you get booed or you get something thrown at you, it's a response. And people that get responses of any sort—they should get pushed. The people that were on our show getting pushed had no responses. Not a boo, not a yea, nothing. That's what makes it frustrating for me. If I wasn't confident like this, I wouldn't be in sports entertainment. Confidence is knowing I'm a main-event player—or at least I have the potential to be. It hurts that they have shoved me under the rug for so many years, but at the same time I know the fans have stayed with me, which is great. I really appreciate the fans staying with me during all this. I told Russo right to his face: "You guys are going out and trying to find stars when you've got stars right here." And I didn't just say me. I said, "Myself, Disqo, Shane Douglas." These are guys that I thought could work and talk. That's the nature of

this business: charisma, work and talk. I told him, "You give guys a push that are going to make it halfway to the moon instead of guys like I mentioned that would make it all the way to the moon." He said, "You know what? You're right. We do do that. I don't know why. We're always trying to find a new this or a new that." He had a decent comeback, but the bottom line is, if you have a guy that you know is ready to get shot to the moon, then shoot him to the moon.

Q: In a business that always is looking for fresh faces, as you just said, it seems that staying in one place for 10 years might work against you. Have you given any thought to a change of scenery?

A: Oh yeah, definitely. I talked about it several times and that option definitely is there. But I am a team player. That may sound corny, but I love WCW. Tomorrow, tomorrow, without a shadow of a doubt, I could go to Vince McMahon. Tomorrow. Do I want to do that? That's not the question. Something is keeping me here, and when Eric came back here, it was another straw to say, "Let's give this thing one more run with Eric in control."

Q: In hindsight, is there anything that you would have handled differently during your time in WCW, something you said that you later regretted?

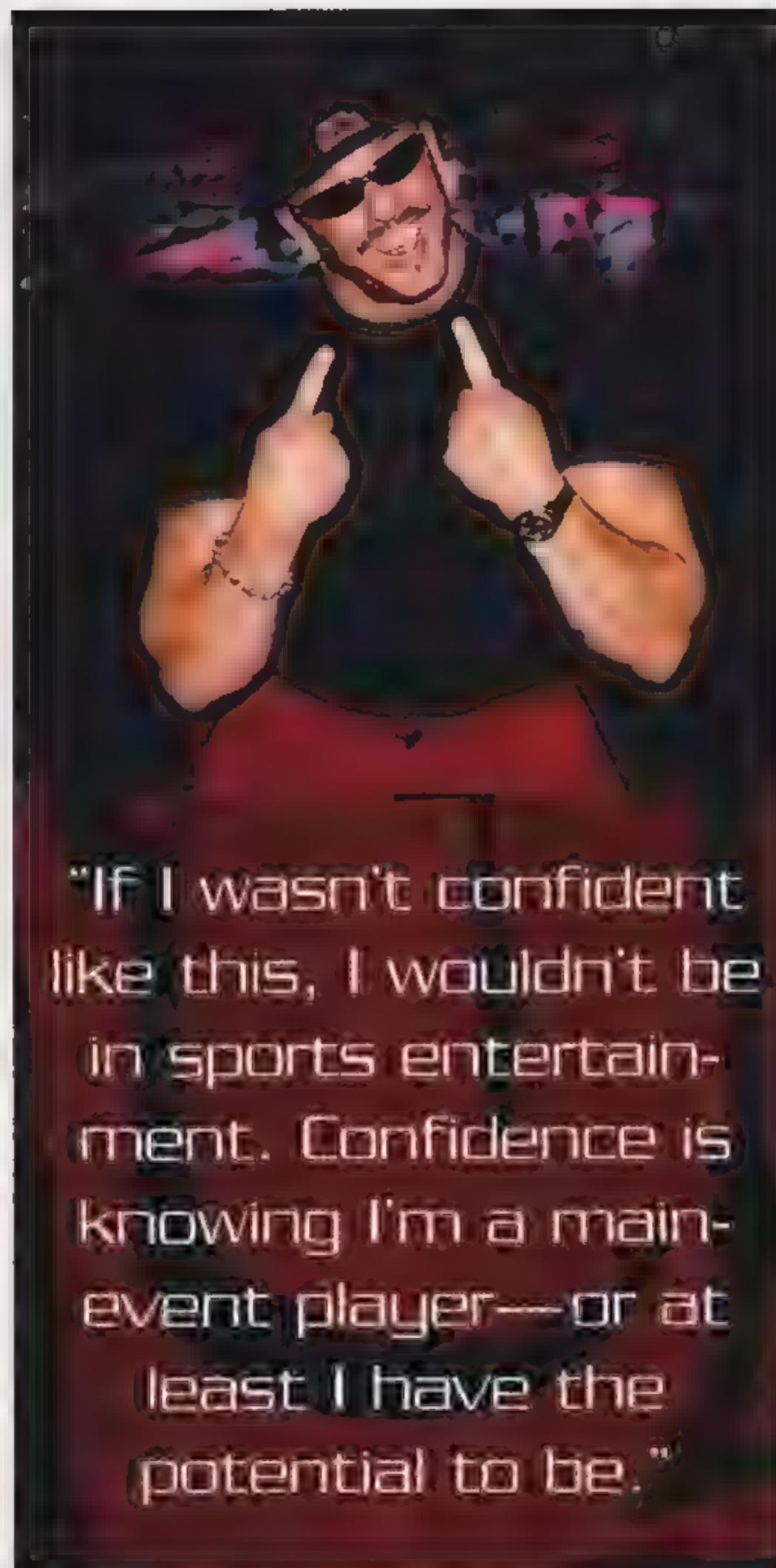
A: Absolutely not. With what they were doing with me, they could not have done anything worse. That's when I picked my time to speak up. I said to myself:

"To not be involved when I saw guys out there that I know are not stars and never will be stars was tough. It was really frustrating for everybody, not just for me."

"What are they going to do? Try to beat me again this week? Do me wrong? Mistreat me? Well, they're doing it now. So if I speak up, all they're going to do is do it again. Big deal." I don't speak up when things are good—nobody normally does. I speak up when I see an absolutely pathetic situation. That's when I spoke up, and I got a ton of heat for it. The reason I got heat for it was not what I said, it was when I said it. Marcus Bagwell, after being so quiet for so many years, the good little Marcus Bagwell who used to get patted on the head and told "Good job, buddy," was speaking up all of a sudden. When that kind of person speaks out, it's really loud. If another guy who's a troublemaker and always raising hell speaks out, it's no big deal—he's just yelling again. But when you are a guy who does exactly what he's told—never misses a shot, never calls in sick, breaks his neck, comes back on TV in three months, is back wrestling in 10 months—when you are that kind of team player, you almost get your feelings hurt. It's hard for me to get my feelings hurt, but that's what it boiled down to. It started with getting my feelings hurt. Then, of course, I got pissed off.

Q: What was the one thing that pushed you over the edge to speak out?

A: They had me doing a job for Big Vito in Cincinnati. I had no problem whatsoever doing that job. We sat down and they laid out the finish and I said, "No problem." Then it hits me: I asked Big Vito who he had at the (New Blood Rising) pay-per-view. He said, "I'm off." I said, "You're not even on the pay-per-view? You've got to be kidding me." Here I was doing a job for a guy that wasn't even on the pay-per-view when I was in an angle with Kanyon to bring Diamond



"If I wasn't confident like this, I wouldn't be in sports entertainment. Confidence is knowing I'm a main-event player—or at least I have the potential to be."

Dallas Page back. So I said, "Guys, I came in this room today to do the right thing. Where's Russo?" So they got Russo, and he explained it a little better, and then they laid out a little different finish. I was supposed to hit my Buff Blockbuster, but then I get distracted because Kanyon is beating up my mom, so I'm distraught. That made sense and I thought I could pull it off. Well, in the end, as we're talking, the Blockbuster kind of disappeared again. I said, "Wait a minute. What happened to the Blockbuster?" And Russo said, "There you go again, talking about winning and losing." I said, "Russo, it's not about winning and losing. It's about business. That's not business." He said, "I want to shock the people." I said, "If you want to shock them, have him beat Goldberg.

Have him beat Sting. Have him beat Lex Luger. I'm not as big a star as those guys." He said, "I hate that you feel like you're getting done wrong. And if you feel like you're getting done wrong, then you're saying that I'm doing you wrong, because I'm writing the show." I said, "Well, then you're doing me wrong." And next thing I know, I was home for two months (*laughs*). Just when I thought there was no way they could do anything else to me, they have a guy beat me that wasn't even on the pay-per-view. That just didn't make any sense. Like I said, I don't complain unless it completely doesn't make sense, and that completely, completely, completely—that's three completelys—did not make sense.

Q: What would you say to those who have labeled you as difficult backstage?

A: I would say look at the last nine years of what Buff has done, not the last one year. Don't look at the one bad year I had. Look at the eight years of being there, not being hurt, not causing trouble, doing exactly what I was told. Then in my ninth year, I speak out, and I'm the biggest heat-seeking missile there is.

Q: Some wrestlers look at the world title belt as merely a prop, while others see it as a real accomplishment. Is getting a run with the belt a goal for you?

A: It really isn't. Everybody wants to be the world champion, and I would like to be the world champion. But there are certain characters that I think do not need a belt. I think Buff doesn't need the belt. Buff entertains. If he had a belt, big deal. The biggest star I've ever seen that never needed a belt is Sting. There are other guys that need belts to bring them up to the same category as Sting—the belt makes them a bigger star. There also are guys that a belt can almost hurt them, and I believe I'm one of those

guys. It puts you in a corner almost. To me personally, it wouldn't do any more for me. Maybe I'm wrong, but that's my personal opinion.

Q: How would you describe your relationship with Lex Luger and Sting, and what have you learned from them?

A: They're my two best friends in the business. I learned from them when to speak and when not to speak, although I wasn't very good at that last year. I was just so frustrated and so was Lex, and he spoke out a lot of times too. There was a lot of things we all said that we shouldn't have said during that one year. But to answer your question, what I learned from those guys was just to lay back, chill out. They've said things like: "You're 31, look what you're making. You busted your butt. Everybody knows you're a star. Just give it time." It's not so much now that I want to be a star; I want respect. If you cut my paycheck in half and give me more respect, I'd be much happier. It's not about the money to me. Sting right away took me under his wing when everybody hated my guts. Well, maybe they didn't hate my guts, but I was 21 years old and people thought I wasn't supposed to be in this business. They thought I was just a prima donna pretty boy who had a silver spoon in his mouth, which they're completely wrong about. I was raised very rough, very worldly and street smart.

Word Association With Buff Bagwell

Booker T.: Super athlete

Sting: Superstar

Ric Flair: Best talker in the business

The Cat: Definite future superstar

Shane Douglas: Great talker, great worker. With the right push, another superstar

Rick Steiner: Legit badass

Diamond Dallas Page: Dedicated, hungry

Eric Bischoff: Best boss I've ever worked for

Scott Steiner: A real world champion

Q: You and Luger have great chemistry as a team in the ring and on the microphone. How much of your real personalities are in the wise-cracking characters we see as *Totally Buffed*?

A: We're the same way off camera. The interviews that we do are completely off the cuff. We have a basic storyline that we're trying to get across, but we don't go over our interviews and practice them like some guys do. We just go out and totally wing it. He starts and I finish, or vice versa. We do have great chemistry and that's something—whether it's with a male or female—that you either have or you don't have. Lex and I always have had great chemistry, so when they

put us together, we knew if they let us do what we want, we'd steal the show. I don't mean that in a cocky way, but with the chemistry we have, we cut great interviews and just have a good time with it. We entertain, and that's what it's all about.

Q: Walk us through the events of April 22, 1998, beginning with the point of impact when Rick Steiner hit you with the bulldog off the top rope.

A: There was absolutely no doubt in my mind that I was paralyzed for the rest of my life. For five minutes, that's how I felt. There was no doubt. It was over. As soon as he hit me, I knew it. It wasn't,

"The good little Marcus Bagwell who used to get patted on the head and told "Good job, buddy," was speaking up all of a sudden. When that kind of person speaks out, it's really loud."





**"It's not so much now
that I want to be a star;
I want respect. If you cut
my paycheck in half and
give me more respect, I'd
be much happier."**

"Oh no, I may be OK" or "Oh no, I'm kind of hurt." It was, "Oh my God, I'm paralyzed." I had been involved in sports long enough to know that something was really wrong. To go from that to five minutes later being able to move my fingers was like, "What a blessing." From there, the first surgery went well on the neck, but it wouldn't clot properly, and then they had to go back in the next morning for emergency surgery. I came home from that, and then I got food poisoning, which hemorrhaged the blood clot again. So I went back in for a third surgery, and that one got me. I lost 50 pounds and they said I'd never wrestle again. My life was in jeopardy two different times on the operating table. The morning I woke up after the first surgery, I couldn't breathe. They had to put a tube up my nostril and down the back of my throat. They couldn't get the tube past the blood clot to my lung. When that happened, I was suffocating the whole time. I could easily have gone into cardiac arrest. I didn't know that at the time, but that's what they told me later. It was the same thing on the operating table. They had a hard time with me breathing because I couldn't breathe past that blood clot—it was blocking my passage. It was two different times that I was very close to going bye-bye.

Q: Did your priorities change after surviving all of that?

A: Absolutely. I felt blessed to know that I had another chance, so I looked at things a lot differently. (*Pause*) That's

kind of a hard question to answer, but I don't forget where I've come from, and I believe that's what makes me who I am. I just don't forget when something good happens to me, and I was very blessed. God was definitely on my shoulder during that time, and he blessed me tremendously. He allowed me to go from being completely paralyzed to walking again and wrestling again. I had a lot of time to look at myself and life. You have to do that to a certain degree, but if you do it too much it can be harmful. There's a fine line between feeling blessed and being thankful and saying, "I won't forget it, but I have to move forward now." That's actually another reason why I got so frustrated last year—that was kind of the lead-in to it all. In my first match back—and I'll never forget it, it was in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 10½ months after the injury—I wrestled in a tag match against Goldberg and Rick Steiner. Not one person came to me after that match and asked me how my neck was, how I was doing, if I was OK, nothing. It's like I told you earlier, my feelings got hurt, and then that slowly turned to anger over time. I had come back in the best shape of my life after a neck injury, and I still ended up with no respect. I went to them that night and said, "This is a legitimate injury where a guy broke my neck. Let's at least show the footage of the injury." Their words to me were: "We don't have it." You don't have it? You've got to be kidding me. So basically they just rushed a great angle into one match.

Q: Were you angry at Rick Steiner for what happened?

A: Absolutely not. I never was mad or the least bit upset. It was a complete accident and I knew that in my heart. There was never a time when I went, "Damn it, that Rick Steiner!" I was just so thankful to God that I was able to walk.

Q: You've been a born-again Christian for years, correct?

A: I became born-again in 1993 in Panama City, Florida. My wife at the time—I'm now divorced—and I were down there partying. My uncle, who is a Christian, was there, and he asked me to go to church with him the next morning. I remember laying down at night and it stuck in my head. I said, "God, if you want me to go to church in the morning, wake me up and I'll go." No alarm clock, no nothing. Well, I woke up at 9:30 and said, "I'm going." We had no clothes for church, so my wife wore high heels and a miniskirt and I had a pair of jeans and a tank top. I said to myself, "God doesn't care what you're wearing. So let's go." We went and we both got saved that day.

Q: Where do you envision Buff Bagwell five years from now?

A: Five years from now is a long time as far as some guys moving out, other guys moving up, and that's how this business works. How many guys are behind the Atlanta Braves' Chipper Jones who may be better than him? You just don't know, so timing is everything. Five years from now, I picture myself being a main-event player every month. ♦

Lance Storm

Head

Storm's mind-set is deadly serious. While some of the shenanigans that take place in WCW rings may take on a bit of P.T. Barnum's showmanship, Storm is the exception. "Laughter is a waste of my time. I got this body and this brain by not wasting time," Storm says.

Eyes

The intensity that radiates from Storm's steely blue eyes casts no light into the man's soul. In fact, hiding his emotions is what he considers one of his most underplayed assets. "I could be in tremendous pain or positively giddy," Storm says while staring intently at the floor, "and no one knows the difference. Displays of emotion are a crutch for the weak." His impenetrable face and piercing eyes are a distracting combo for his opponents.

Hands

They can either clasp another hand in friendship (such as "Prime Time" Elix Skipper or "Canadian Killer" Mike Awesome) or wield the knife that stabs someone in the back (like Hacksaw Jim Duggan). "Elix and Mike are superior athletes," Storm says. "It's a real pleasure to work closely with men who take this sport and the training with the same seriousness I do. Duggan, unfortunately, got caught up in wanting just one more run at the top."

Heart

The native of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, bleeds Maple Leaf red. "Look at the cream of the wrestling crop: Bret Hart, Owen Hart, Chris Jericho, Chris Benoit, even an American like Brian Pillman—they all learned to wrestle in Calgary," Storm says. "That is not a coincidence. I honestly feel the best wrestlers and the best teachers come from Canada."

Chest

More often than not, it's puffed out beyond belief. "Pride is all there is," he says. Storm's nemesis, The Cat, continually claws away at Storm's swelled ego by referring to Storm as "Sgt. Carter" or "Power Ranger." But Storm isn't bothered. "He can call me whatever he wants," Storm says, almost cracking a smile. "It doesn't bother me. I know that in the ring, talking is nothing but hot air."

Waist

Numerous title belts have graced Storm's waist. He was the only man to hold three WCW singles championships simultaneously—the United States, hardcore and cruiserweight titles. Shockingly, Storm relinquished two of the titles to fellow members of Team Canada. ("My first and last mistake," Storm says. While currently beltless, Storm remains optimistic. "I'll have a belt again. They know I'm marketable and, more importantly, I'm good.")

Back

Storm has carried Team Canada since the group's inception last summer. While Major Guns, Jacques Rougeau and Carl Oulette have come and gone, Storm has been the foundation upon which the House of the Maple Leaf was constructed. "Quitters all," Storm says bitterly. "But myself, Elix and Mike constitute the best incarnation of Team Canada. This finally can be an equal partnership." If this version of Team Canada disbands, Storm should heed his advice: "Don't blame Canada; blame yourself!"

Legs

One need only watch a Storm match to realize how amazingly strong his legs are. He uses the spring-like power of his lower body to hurl his 235-pound frame through the air with the agility of a gazelle. "I can squat with ropes of 300 pounds," Storm says. When he slaps on the Maple Leaf finisher (a half-crab with a deep bend), the extra strength makes a submission a mere formality.

Unleashed

Back from a sabbatical, Rick Steiner is focused on a singles career and hungry for competition

By Rich Scherr

During his 18 years in professional wrestling, Rick Steiner has mastered the art of playing the bully in the ring. When the demands of his career finally began bullying him, however, the father of three came up with his most demonstrative move of all—he walked away.

"I think for a while I would just go out there and go through the motions, and it wasn't fun anymore," Steiner says. "I was thinking, 'Man, do I really have it anymore? I just needed to take a break.'

After six months of hunting, relaxing and playing with his children in Cartersville, Georgia, Steiner is back in WCW with a clear mind, a rejuvenated spirit and—after spending most of his career teaming with brother Scott—a desire to prove himself as a singles star.

"I came back and got back to serious working out, training and staying in shape," says Steiner, who has had some success as a singles wrestler, winning the National Wrestling Alliance/WCW TV title three times. "You start seeing it again and you get a little hungry, and you get in with the guys and you say, 'You know, I do still have it.'"

It didn't take long for the "Dogface Gremlin" to prove he still had it, defeating "The Franchise" Shane Douglas to win the United States title in February. What sealed Steiner's comeback was the return of good friend Eric Bischoff to the role of WCW president in January.

"He's taken the business to another

level—money-wise, attendance-wise, all that," Steiner says. "He has a track record of being successful. It's just a matter of plugging in the right components."

Steiner always has been one of those components. Following a stellar career in amateur wrestling—capped by a fourth-place finish in the NCAA tournament while at the University of Michigan—he broke into the professional ranks with the likes of Sting and Jim "Ultimate Warrior" Hellwig in former longtime promoter Bill Watts territory.

Steiner moved to the NWA, which became WCW when Ted Turner bought the company.

Along the way, Steiner got the opportunity to break his younger brother into the business and team with him for the better part of a decade. It was a dream scenario for both brothers, who did everything together as children and continue to be a huge part of each other's lives. They live a block from one another.

"Scott comes over every day to see the kids (ages 3, 6 and 9), and we ride four-wheelers," says Steiner, adding that their sibling rivalry long since has passed. "Deep down I think he's a pretty decent guy, other than when he gets around the ring."

As one of only a handful of professional wrestlers to have had a successful amateur career, Steiner says he commands respect from most of his peers. There's not a guy out there that, if I

wanted to, I couldn't just take them down and beat them," he says. "Some of the guys know that, so there's a little respect that I've gained from the other guys that makes them say, 'OK, we'll do this, we'll do that. They're a little easier to deal with.'

Steiner credits his amateur background with giving him the confidence to play the bully in the ring. "When you get in the ring with the guys that we have today and you're able to dictate most of what goes on, I think it gives you a little attitude when you get out there," he says.

During his time off, however, that attitude quickly had to change. "It's good for TV, but when I get home it doesn't work anymore," Steiner says.

He says his break from wrestling gave him a chance to think about the direction of his career. Steiner has 18 months remaining on his contract and would like to wrestle for another four or five years.

Until then, he plans to make the most of his time in the ring. "I think sometimes guys get in there and they kind of lose focus on what really works," Steiner says. "The company kind of made a change (in putting focus back on veteran wrestlers). I saw that and I felt it was time to get back in the swing. Now, the only thing left that I would like to do is have a successful singles career and then finish up." ♦



The Natural

Since cruiserweight sensation "Sugar" Shane Helms was 13 years old, it was obvious that he was destined for wrestling stardom

By Jennifer Williams

It's the age-old nature vs. nurture question. Does a man's genetic makeup determine the course of his life or does his environment influence his fate? In the case of "Sugar" Shane Helms, it's hard to tell.

The term "life-long wrestling fan" has become a cliché for many wrestlers, but it's a true statement for Helms. He attended his first wrestling show at the age of 5 and credits his father, a diehard wrestling fan, with introducing him to the genre. He doesn't know exactly how old he was when he started watching wrestling, but the first televised program he remembers was a wrestling show.

Upon seeing Helms in the ring, one would swear a wrestling gene was part of his DNA. He has a knack for seeing a move and then executing it perfectly, and his natural ability to invent moves and diagram matches makes it seem as if he was created to wrestle. Whether his wrestling aptitude is a freak of nature, a God-given talent or a product of his wrestling-drenched environment, one thing is clear: Helms is destined to leave an indelible mark on the world of sports entertainment as a pioneer of cruiserweight wrestling.

In the past several months, the former 3 Count member has had an opportunity to showcase his skills in WCW's revamped cruiserweight division. Helms' series of matches against Chavo Guerrero Jr. for the

cruiserweight title have been nothing short of breathtaking.

"Wrestling is pretty much all that I wanted to do," Helms says. "If it wasn't for my father watching it, who knows what I'd be doing. My dad was a truck driver and he traveled a lot when I was a kid. I went to a lot of different schools, probably 10 or 13 if you count all of the different middle schools and high schools that I attended, so I was the perennial new kid. But wrestling was my staple. I always had wrestling."

Helms, in fact, had much more going for him than just wrestling; it was just that his interest in the mat wars consumed him. When he was in the seventh grade, his test scores on the California Achievement Test (CAT) were in the 99th percentile (meaning only 1 percent of those taking the test scored better). His academic ability led to an invitation to a program for gifted students at Truman State University in Missouri. "I didn't put a lot of emphasis on my schoolwork because it came easily to me," he says. "I was just a kid and I wanted to have fun. Wrestling was so much fun, so I just based my life around it."

Although he's only 26, Helms has been wrestling for 10 years. At 13, he attended his first independent wrestling show and soon began working for the promotion as part of the ring crew. Shortly thereafter, Helms





independent circuit for eight years. It was during this time that he performed the spectacular move that led to his employment in WCW—a dive off an 18-wheeler into the ring and onto his opponent, who was prone on a table. "We were at a National Guard armory. There was a military transport 18-wheeler there, and they couldn't move it," Helms says. "So they had to set up the ring next to it. It was there, so I used it. It was just another prop." Helms sent a tape of that match to WCW wrestler Chris Kanyon, and Kanyon introduced him to WCW boss

Eric Bischoff, who signed Helms immediately after his tryout match.

While Helms always knew he wanted to wrestle, he didn't seriously pursue his dream of making it with one of the major companies until three years ago. "In January of 1998, I decided that if I was going to be successful in wrestling, I had to devote every ounce of energy and time to this," he says. "The biggest downfall in my career was that I had people telling me that I was so good and that I'd get a

began training for wrestling, and his ability to learn quickly put him ahead of his classmates. "I was only there a couple of weeks before I was doing more of the training than getting trained," he says. "This is very hard for people to understand, but when I was a kid, I could look at something and know how to do it. I'd see a move on TV and would say, 'OK, I know how to do this,' and I would do it."

Helms continued to train, and he wrestled his first match at 16. He went on to work on the



job and I'd make it. And for some reason, I thought the wrestling federations were going to find me, so I never sent out tapes. WCW was the only place that I sent a tape to. In retrospect, it wasn't arrogance. I just didn't know any better. When I sent my tape in and got hired, I kicked myself in the butt and wondered why I hadn't done it earlier."

Helms spent the early part of his career in WCW on the set of the movie "Ready to Rumble." He originally was brought into the project to help with the choreography of the wrestling scenes, but he ended up becoming the stunt double for David Arquette, the movie's star. After five months of working on the movie, Helms came home for a few weeks before appearing on WCW television as a member of 3 Count, the wrestling trio/wannabe boy band.

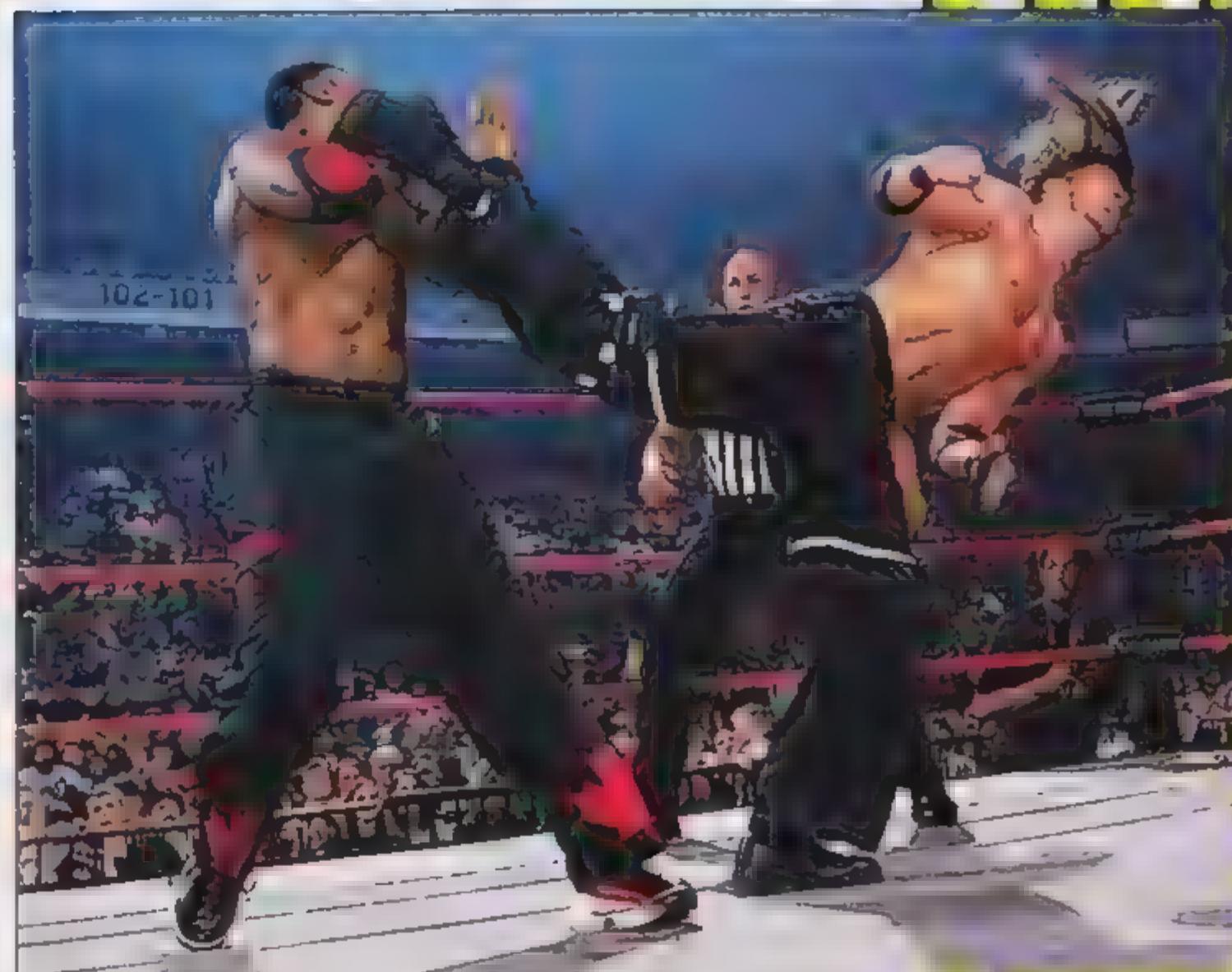
"The 3 Count angle was the brainchild of Jimmy Hart," Helms says. "They were trying to find something to do with Evan Karagias and wanted to find him some partners. Jimmy asked me if I could sing and dance and I said, 'Yeah.' I would have said yes whether I could or not. Then he said, 'What about your partner?' I looked at Shannon Moore and said, 'Yeah, he can sing.' Of course, I had no idea whether he could or not.

"3 Count was fun while it lasted, but my singles matches were better than my 3 Count matches. Whenever that becomes the case, it's time to move on. I'm so much more comfortable in a singles role now, and this is where I want to be. There's no sense in getting half of the credit when you can get all of the credit."

Helms is getting plenty of credit these days, especially when it comes to creating moves. It's no wonder WCW announcer Mike Tenay labeled Helms the "Sensation of Innovation." Helms created most of the moves that 3 Count performed, as well as his signature move, the Nightmare on Helms Street, and his finisher, the VerteBreaker, which is a variation of a Japanese move called the Reverse Kudo Driver.

"Coming up with new moves has gotten me a lot of attention," he says. "The Big Show of the World Wrestling Federation started doing my Nightmare on Helms Street move, and that got me a lot of attention on the Internet and in the dirt sheets."

He not only creates moves for himself, but Helms also helps other wrestlers with their moves and their matches. "If I come up with a



move that I can't use for whatever reason, I'll give it to someone else," he says.

Helms' creativity doesn't end there. He has had to design a unique wrestling style for himself because of his build (6', 200 pounds). "I'm tall and skinny," says Helms, whose cruiserweight opponents are usually shorter and stockier. "I'm definitely not weak, but I have to create my own style because there's never been anyone like me in cruiserweight wrestling before."

His athletic ability and understanding of match psychology has earned Helms the respect of his fellow cruiserweights, as well as some of the older, more experienced wrestlers. "I have a knack for storytelling, and I've been in wrestling longer than most of the other cruiserweights combined," Helms says. "Even when I've worked with guys who are more experienced, they see what I can do in the ring and they know by talking to me backstage that I'm good creatively."

After his in-ring career is over, Helms, not surprisingly, wants to remain in the industry, either on the creative side or as a trainer. "When I was training people before, I'd tell them, 'OK, now watch me and do it.' And they couldn't do it. I'd think, 'What's wrong with them?' So I definitely have to get a lot more patience, but that would be fun."

We may never get to answer the nature vs. nurture question, but one thing is certain: WCW will be forever changed by the creativity and sheer talent that Helms brings to the ring. ♦



Pay-Per-View
Jacksonville,
Florida
March 18, 2001

World Heavyweight Title Match

Champ Scott Steiner def
Diamond Dallas Page

Dusty Rhodes and Dustin Rhodes def
Ric Flair and Jeff Jarrett

U.S. Title Match

Booker T pinned champion Rick Steiner

Tag-Team Title Match

Champions Sean O'Haire
and Chuck Palumbo
def. Totally Buffed

The Cat pinned Kanyon

Cruiserweight Title Match

"Sugar" Shane Helms pinned
champion Chavo Guerrero Jr.

Team Canada def
Konnan and Hugh Morris

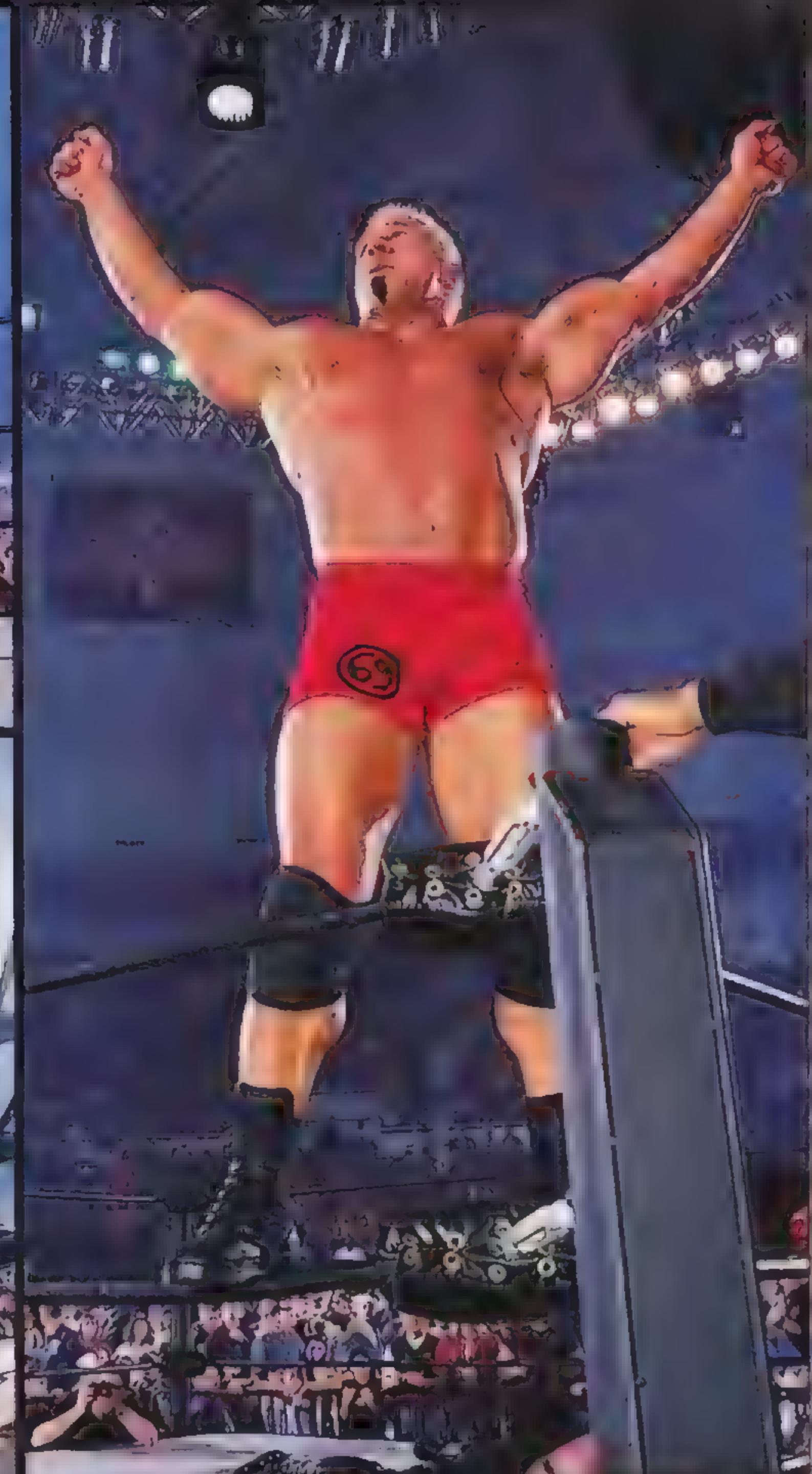
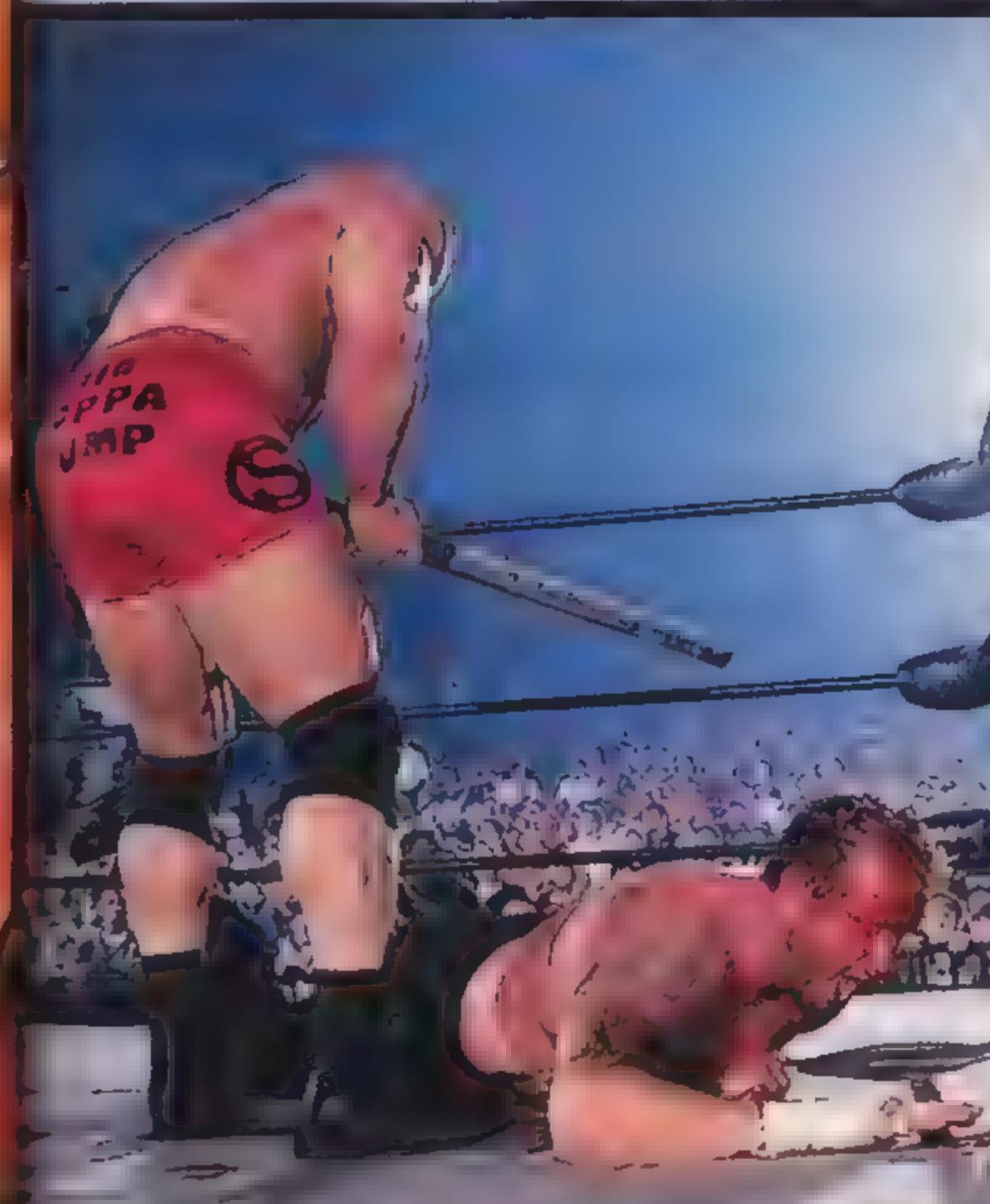
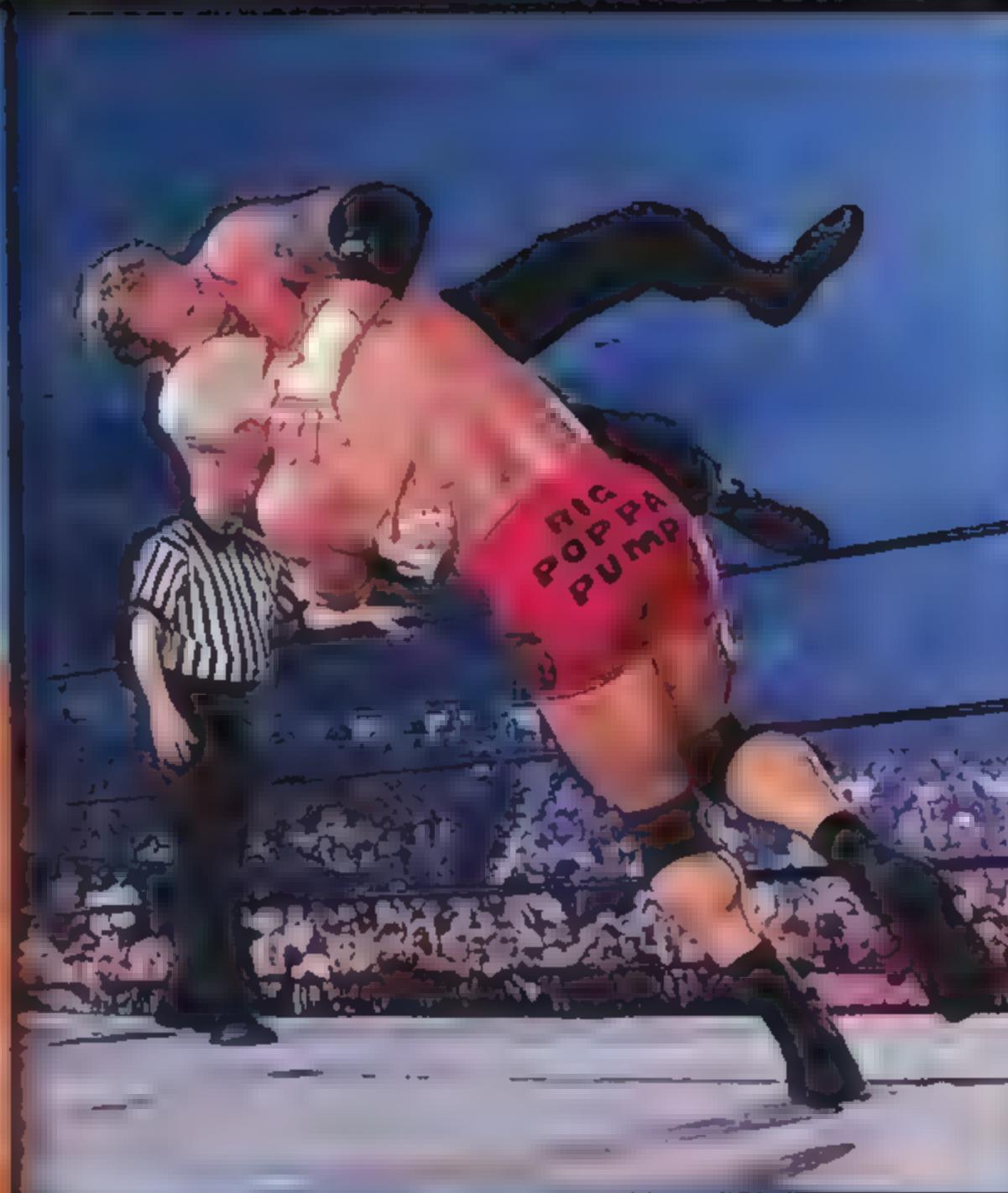
Shawn Stasiak pinned
Bam Bam Bigelow

Cruiserweight Tag-Team Title Match

"Prime Time" Elx Skipper and Kid Romeo def
Rey Mysterio Jr. and Billy Kidman

Jason Jett pinned Kwee Wee

Photography by
Scott Cunningham



Diamond Dallas Page, heralded as the "Last Man Standing," was reduced to a bloody, crumpled heap by the end of Greed, as WCW world heavyweight champion Scott Steiner once again satisfied his voracious appetite for destruction.

It wasn't easy for "Big Poppa"

Pump," however. The resilient Page, determined not to become the latest fan favorite put out of commission by Steiner, nearly pulled off the upset. But outside interference, foreign objects and the sheer power and brutality of the champion proved too much even for DDP.

Steiner's victory ended up being

the lone bright spot for WCW CEO Ric Flair's elite group. Flair himself suffered a humiliating defeat, as he turned back the clock to resume his legendary feud with Dusty Rhodes in a tag-team match pitting the "Nature Boy" and Jeff Jarrett against the "American Dream" and Dustin Rhodes.

Booker T—with an unexpected

assist from "The Franchise" Shane Douglas—won the U.S. title from Rick Steiner, while Totally Buffed was totally overmatched against tag-team champions Sean O'Haire and Chuck Palumbo. In other developments: The Cat and Ms. Jones settled the score with Kanyon; "Sugar" Shane Helms overcame the odds and dethroned cruiser-

weight champion Chavo Guerrero Jr. "Prime Time" Elx Skipper and Kid Romeo knocked off the more established team of Rey Mysterio Jr. and Billy Kidman to become the first cruiserweight tag-team champions; and Shawn Stasiak, accompanied by the returning Stacy, continued his winning ways by besting Bam Bam Bigelow.

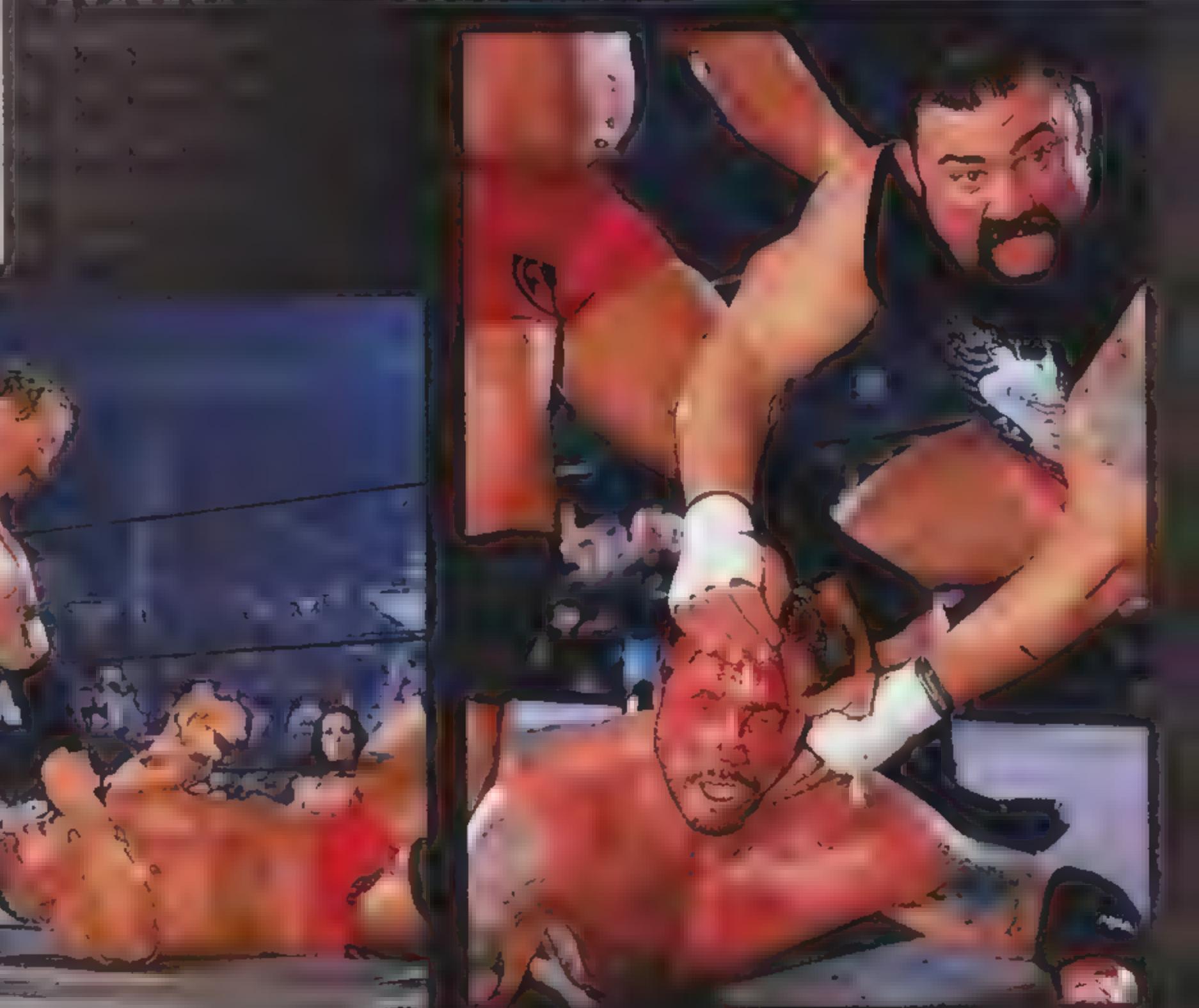
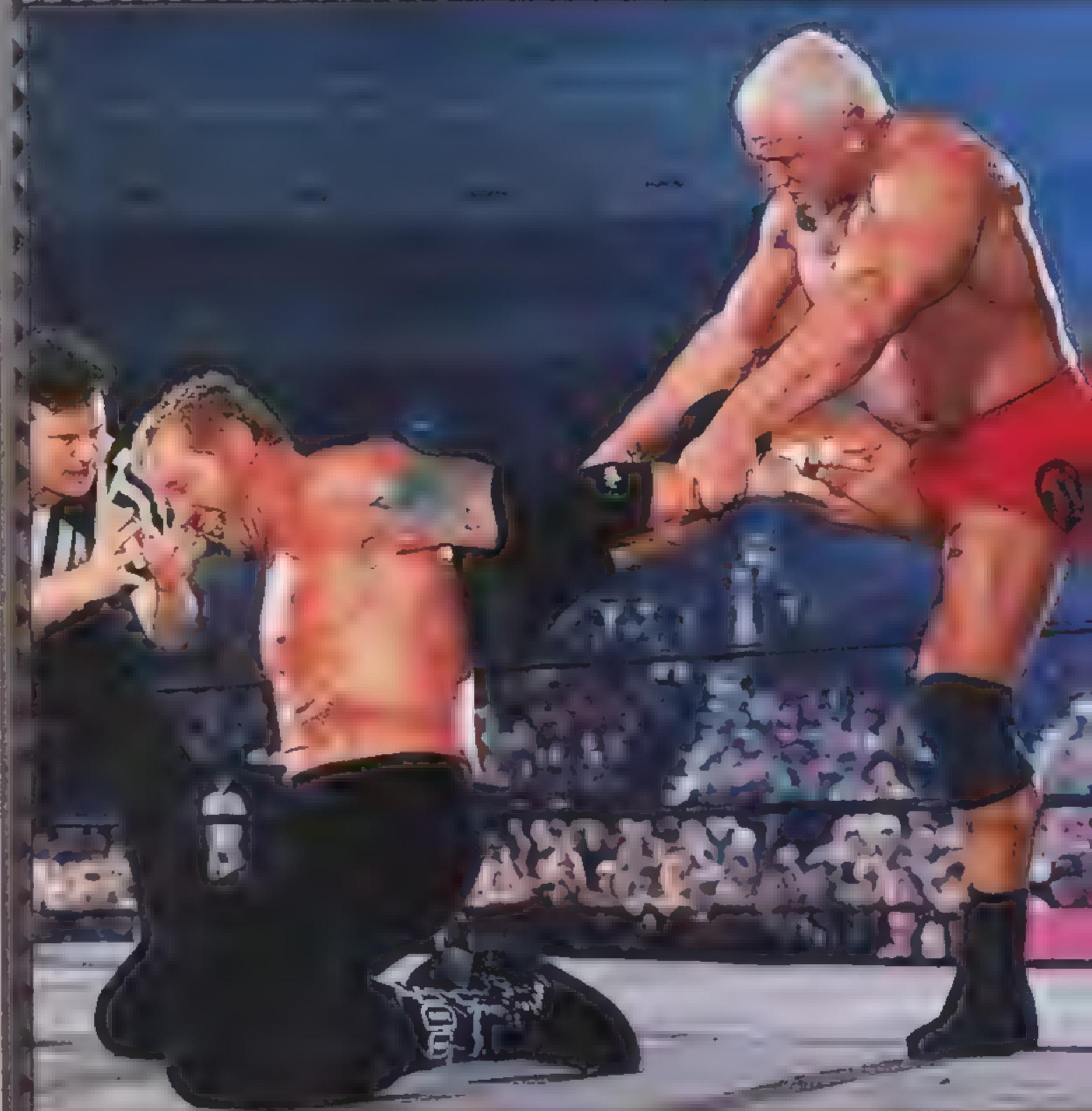
World Heavyweight Title Match

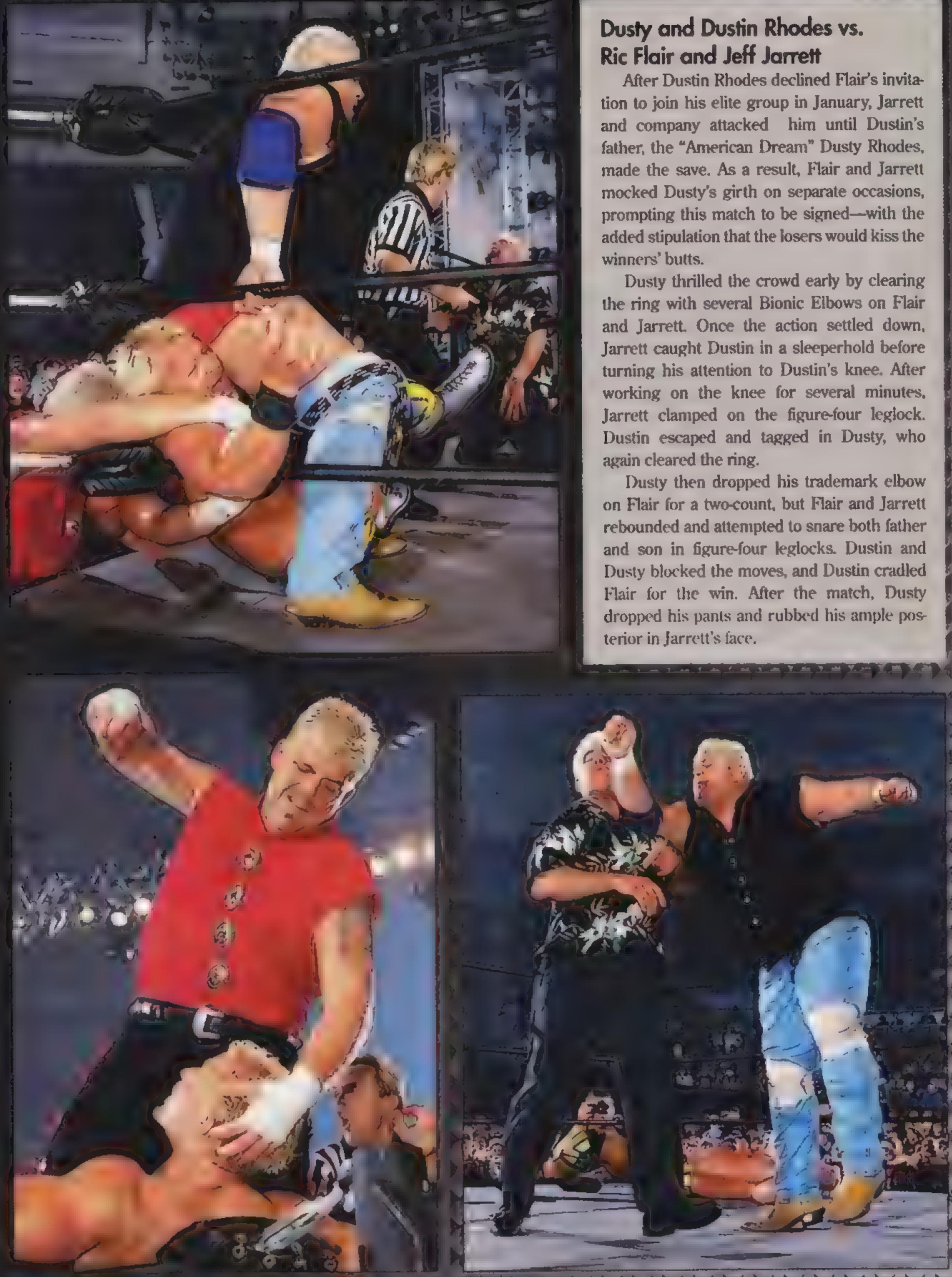
Champion Scott Steiner attempted to maim Diamond Dallas Page with his lead pipe leading up to Greed, but DDP managed to outsmart the champ on several occasions. In the Greed pre-show, WCW CEO Ric Flair ordered the match to be contested under falls-count-anywhere rules.

Page went on the offensive early, and the action quickly spilled outside the ring. Steiner then took a crutch from a hobbled DDP fan and hit Page with it. The fan then tossed DDP his other crutch and Page leveled the champion with it before putting Steiner through a table with an elbow drop.

Back in the ring, Steiner controlled the match and nearly won after a belly-to-belly suplex. Page rebounded, however, and incapacitated the champion with a Diamond Cutter, prompting Rick Steiner to run out and break up the pin attempt.

With referee Nick Patrick down, "Big Poppa Pump" grabbed the title belt and hit DDP in the head with it, causing a massive cut on the challenger's forehead. With Page bleeding profusely, Steiner slapped on a Steiner Recliner, but Page broke the hold by making it to the ropes. Following lead pipe shots to Page's back and ribs, Steiner applied another Steiner Recliner to retain his title.





Dusty and Dustin Rhodes vs. Ric Flair and Jeff Jarrett

After Dustin Rhodes declined Flair's invitation to join his elite group in January, Jarrett and company attacked him until Dustin's father, the "American Dream" Dusty Rhodes, made the save. As a result, Flair and Jarrett mocked Dusty's girth on separate occasions, prompting this match to be signed—with the added stipulation that the losers would kiss the winners' butts.

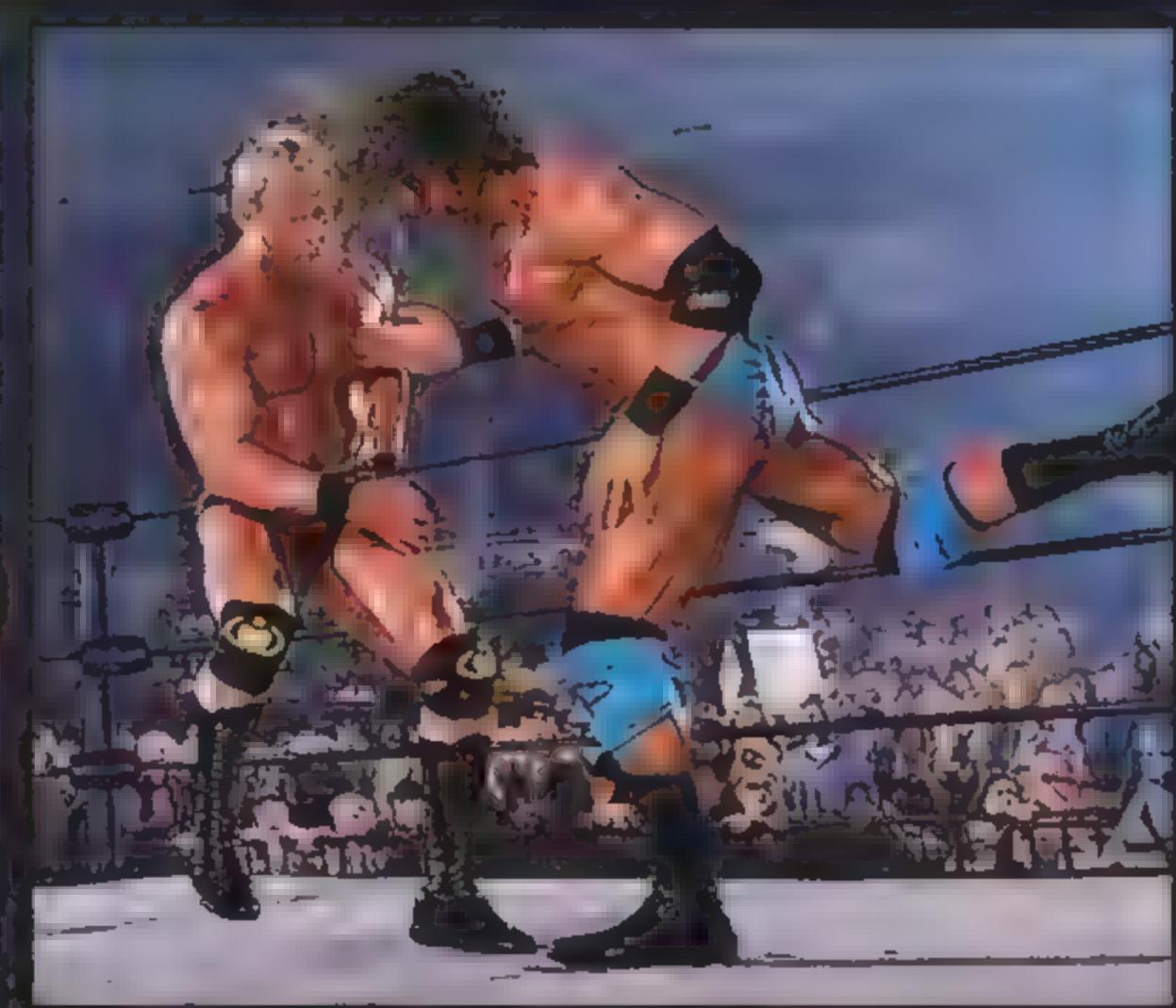
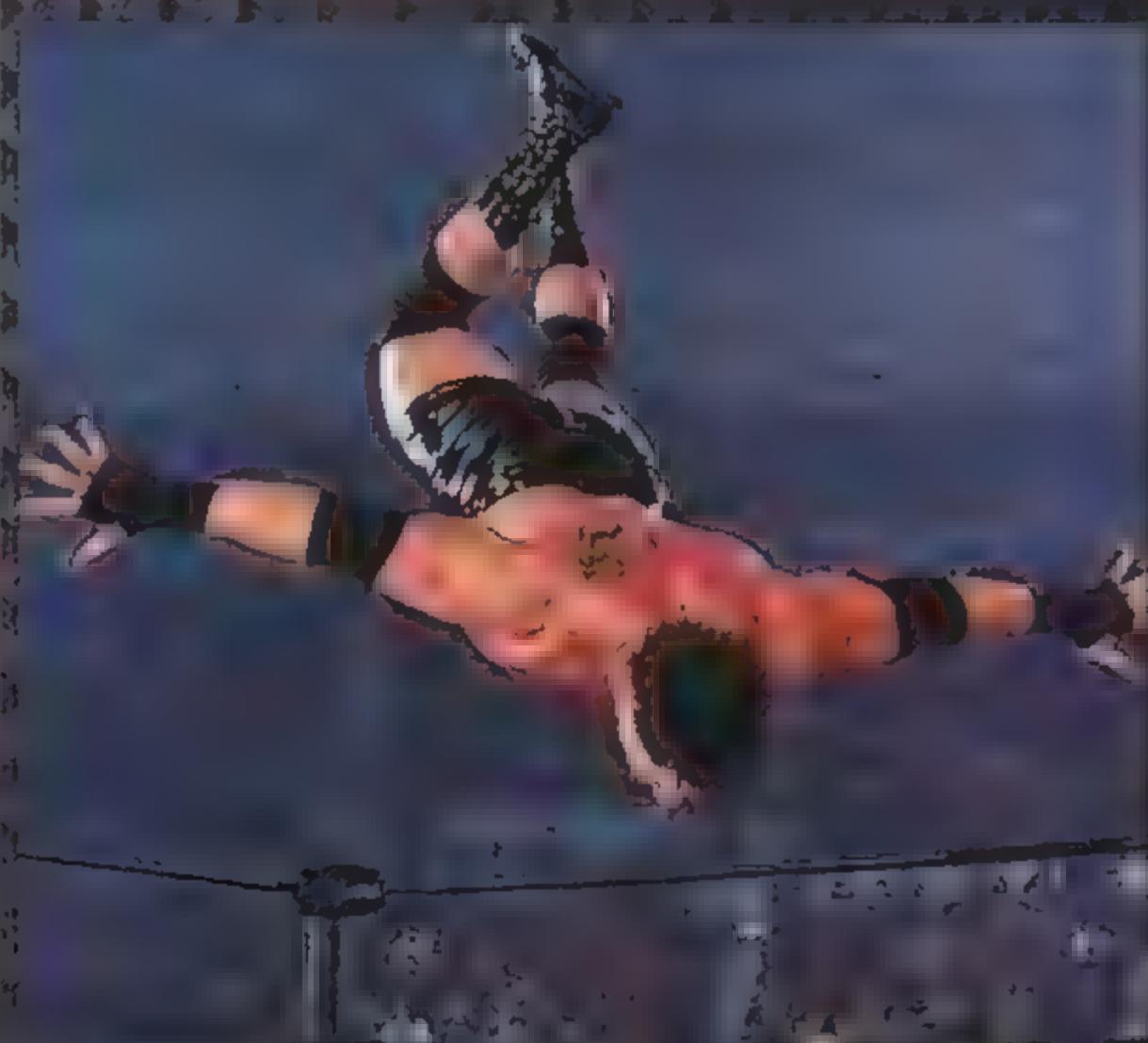
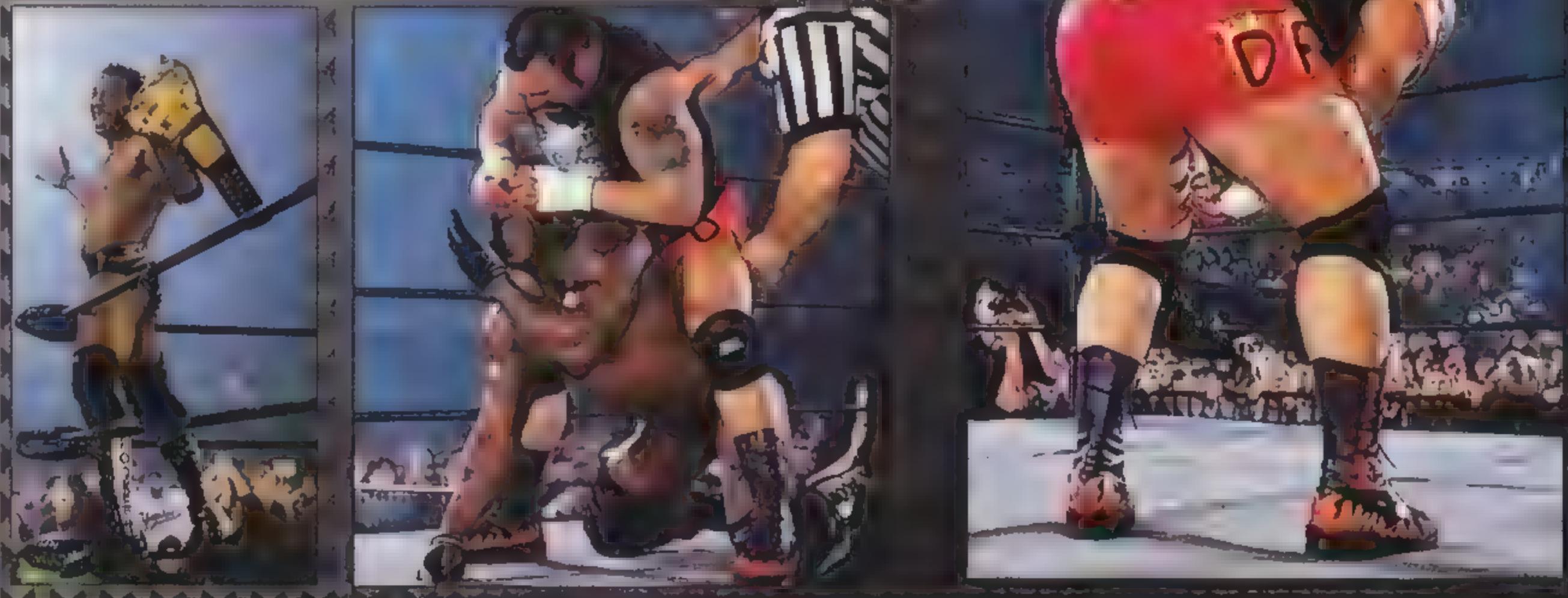
Dusty thrilled the crowd early by clearing the ring with several Bionic Elbows on Flair and Jarrett. Once the action settled down, Jarrett caught Dustin in a sleeperhold before turning his attention to Dustin's knee. After working on the knee for several minutes, Jarrett clamped on the figure-four leglock. Dustin escaped and tagged in Dusty, who again cleared the ring.

Dusty then dropped his trademark elbow on Flair for a two-count, but Flair and Jarrett rebounded and attempted to snare both father and son in figure-four leglocks. Dustin and Dusty blocked the moves, and Dustin cradled Flair for the win. After the match, Dusty dropped his pants and rubbed his ample posterior in Jarrett's face.

U.S. Title Match

Champion Rick Steiner wore down Booker T. with a chinlock and several stiff shots. But, feeding off of the crowd's energy, Booker fought back and leveled Steiner with the Ghetto Blaster (axe kick). Booker then attempted to Harlem Sidekick the champ, but Steiner ducked and referee Mickie Jay was hit by mistake.

With Jay dazed, Steiner climbed to the top turnbuckle. As Steiner prepared to pounce, "The Franchise" Shane Douglas—out of action due to a broken wrist suffered at the hands of Steiner—emerged from the crowd and bashed Steiner in the head with his cast. With Steiner hurt, Booker landed the Bookend to capture the title.

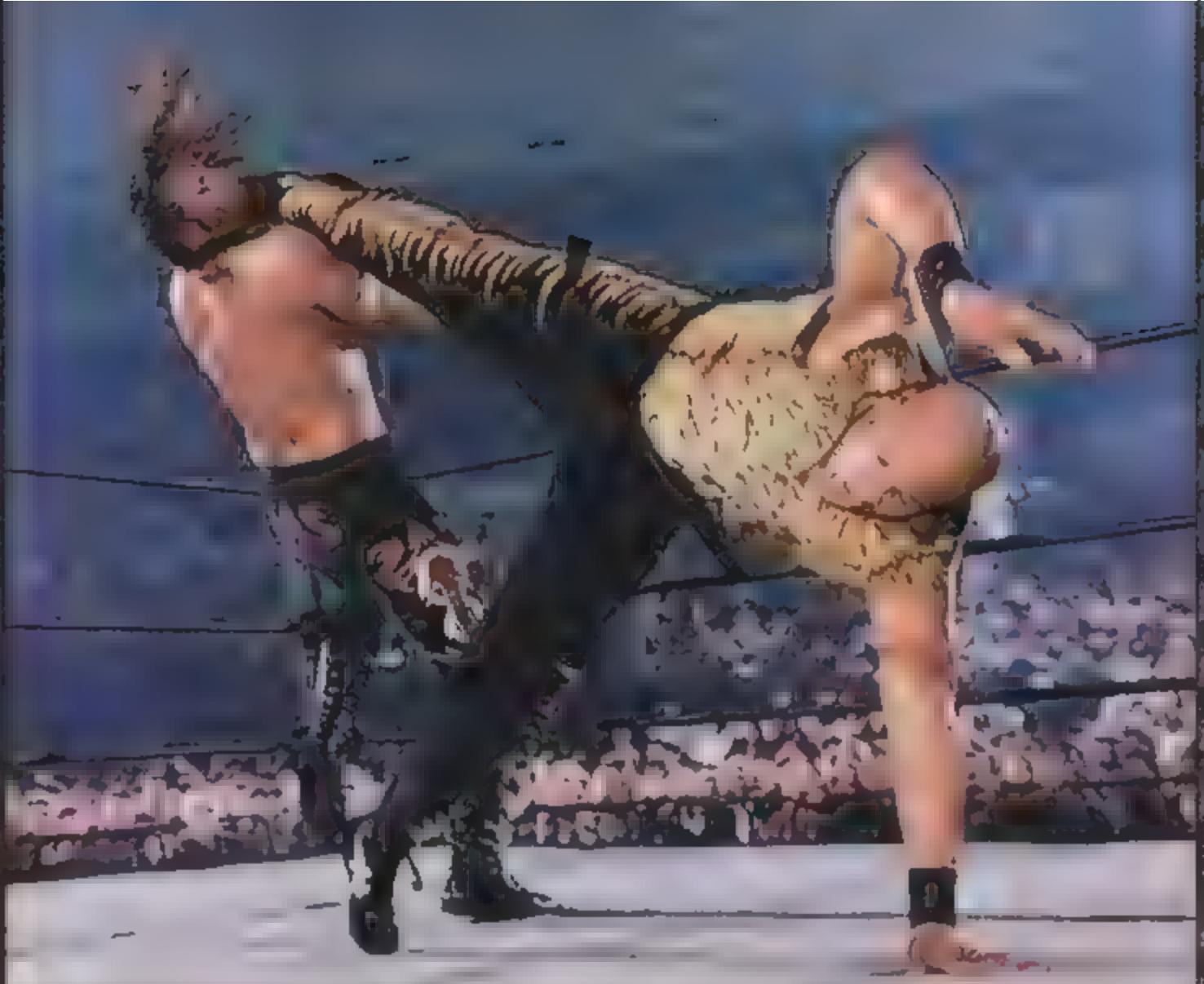
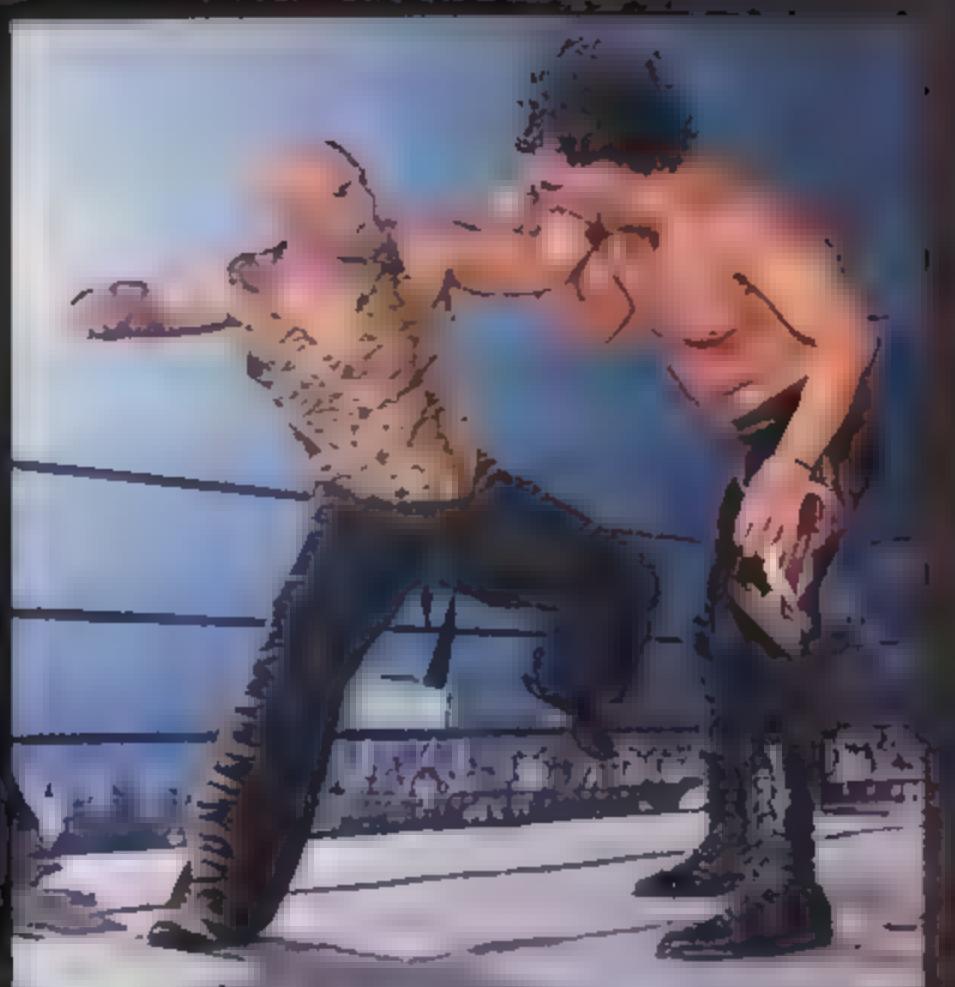


Tag-Team Title Match

Before the match started, Totally Buffed grabbed the microphone and told the crowd how easy it was going to be to dethrone champions Sean O'Haire and Chuck Palumbo. Upon hearing this, O'Haire and

Palumbo charged the ring and pummeled the challengers. O'Haire landed Seanton bombs on Buff Bagwell and Lex Luger to win the match in less time than it took for Bagwell and Luger to cut their promo.

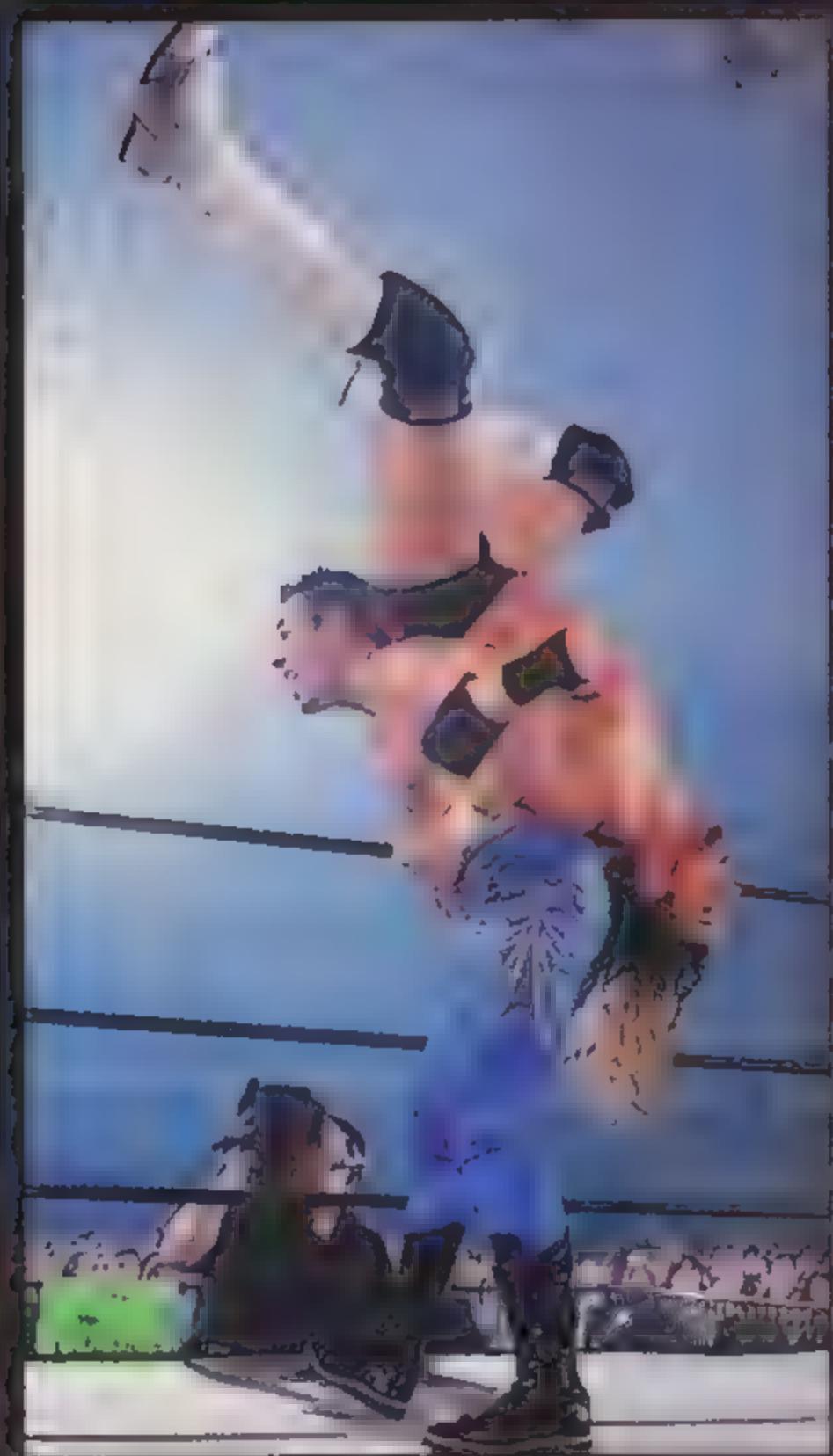




Kanyon vs. The Cat

The Cat, seeking revenge after Kanyon sent Ms. Jones to the hospital a few weeks earlier, nailed Kanyon with the Feliner, but could only get a two count. Kanyon then pulled a foreign object out of his shorts and leveled the three-time

karate champ. The Cat recovered, and he held Kanyon so Ms. Jones could kick him. But Kanyon moved and The Cat was kicked by mistake. Ms. Jones then kicked Kanyon, and The Cat hit Kanyon with another Feliner to score the victory.



Cruiserweight Title Match

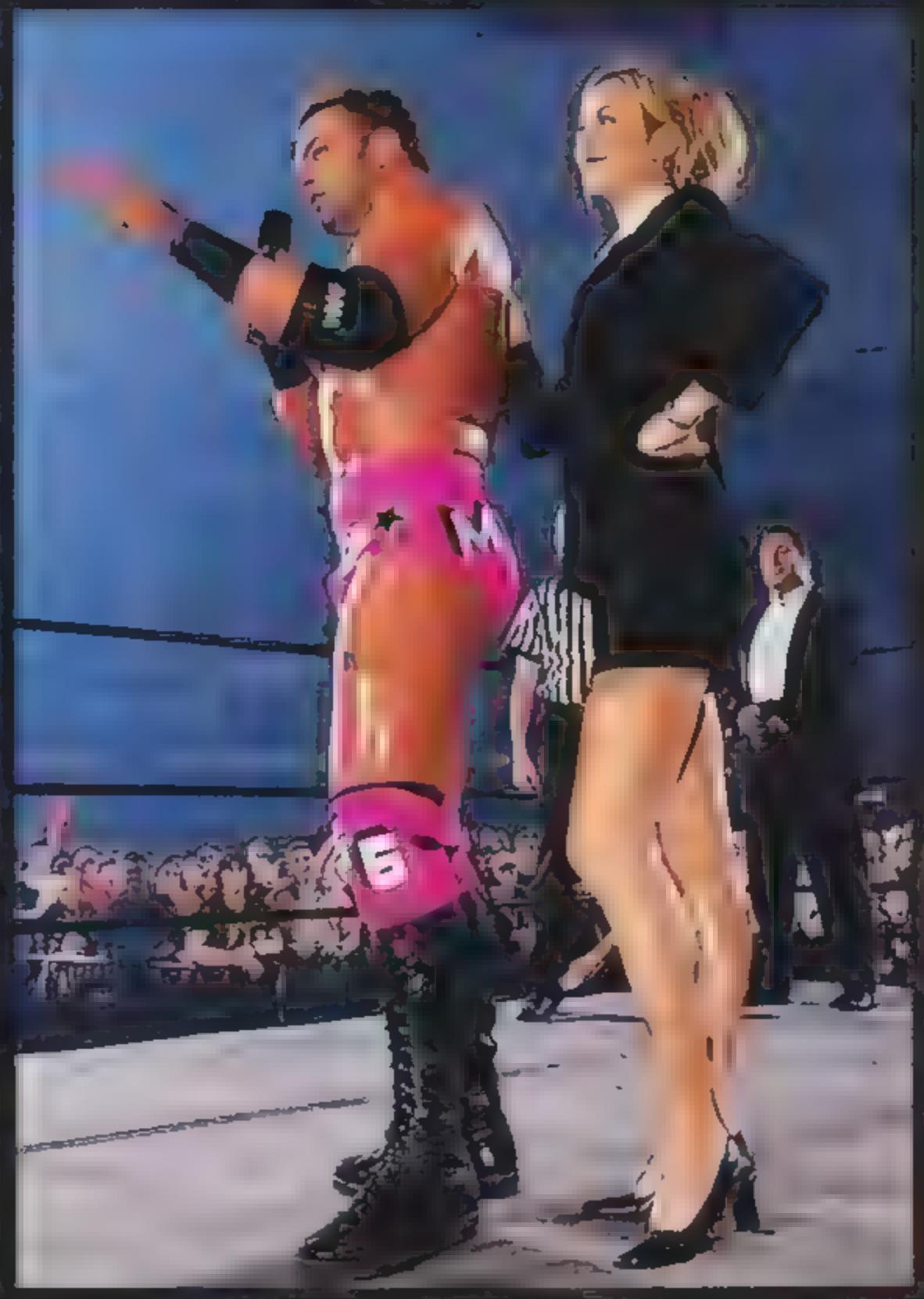
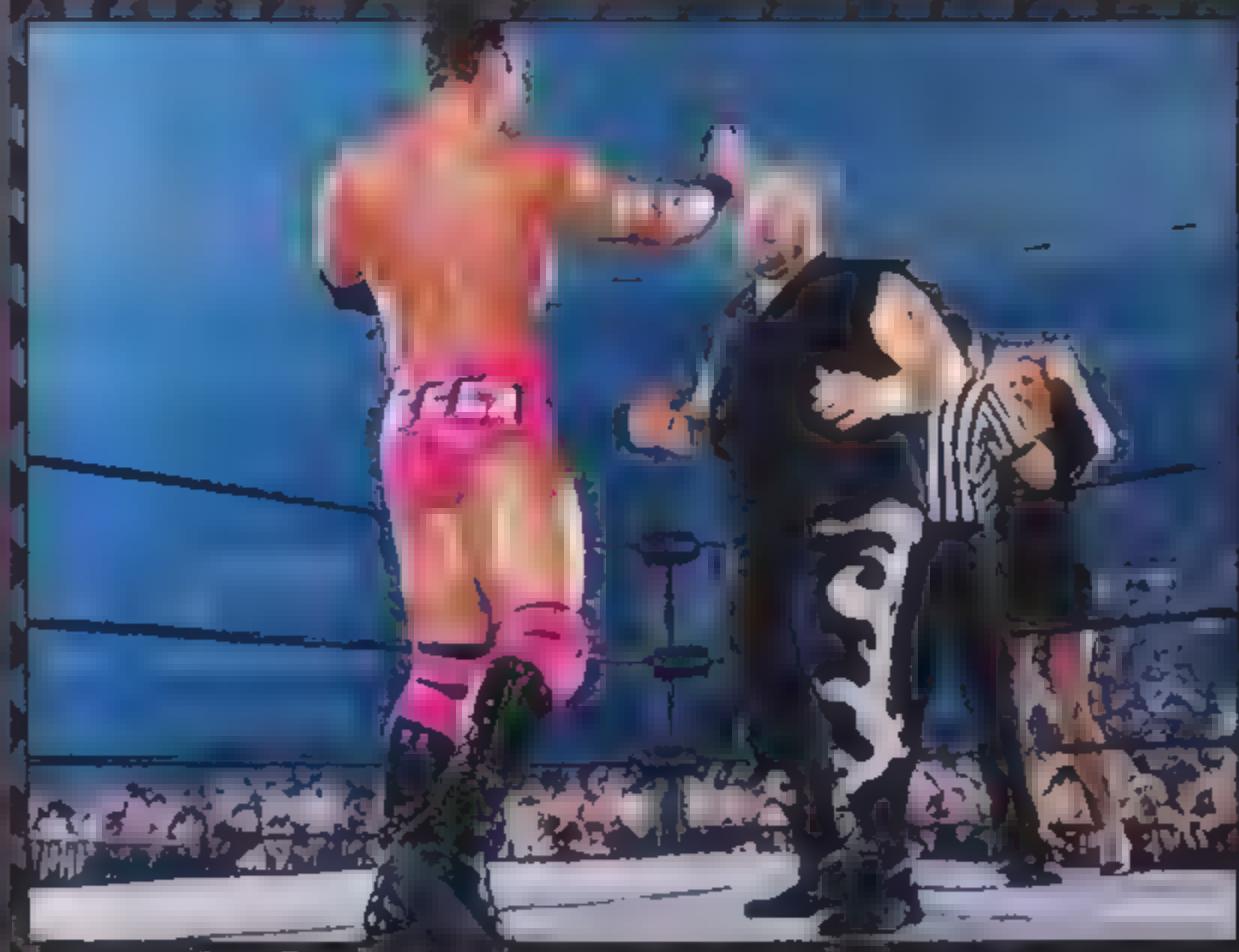
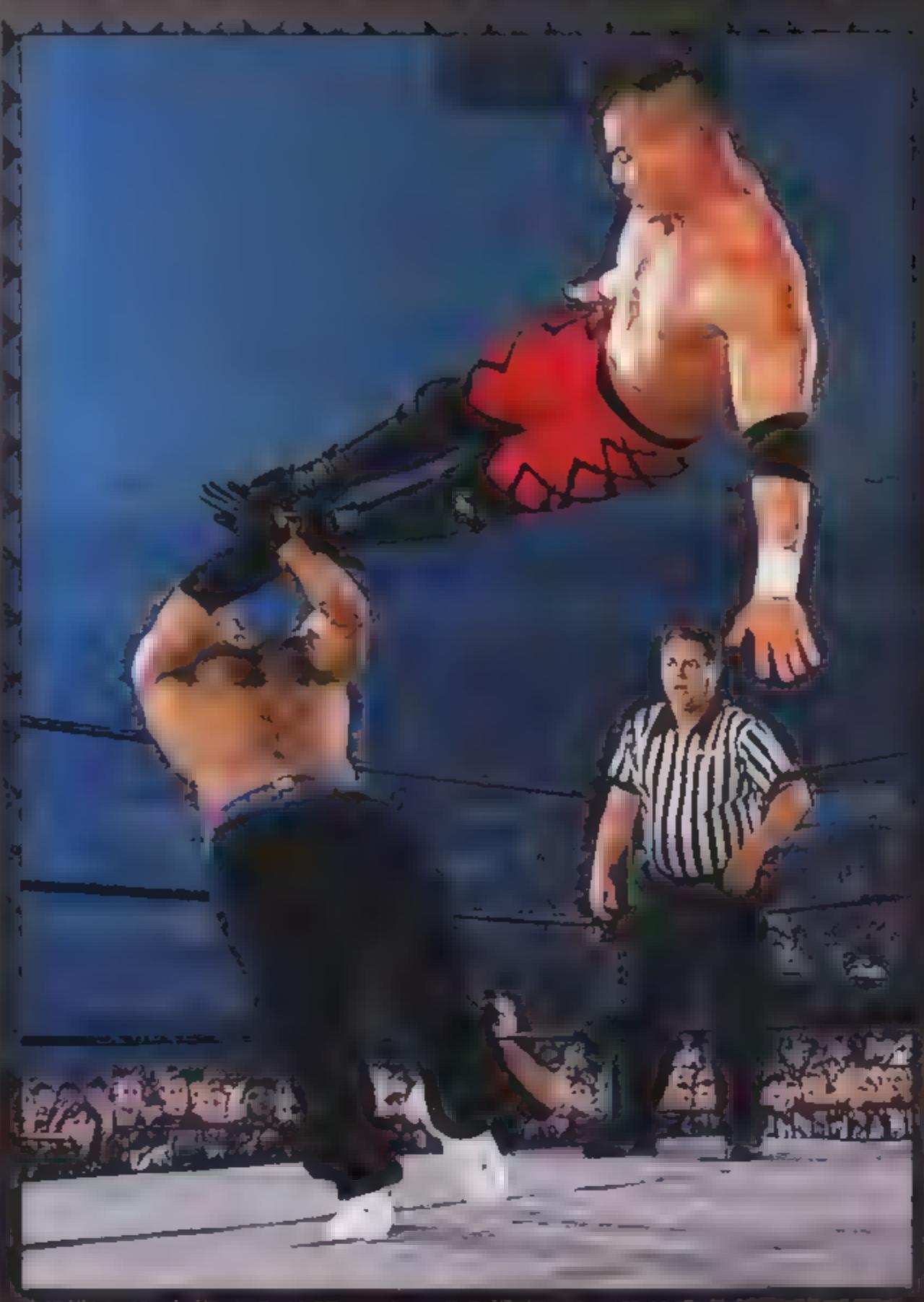
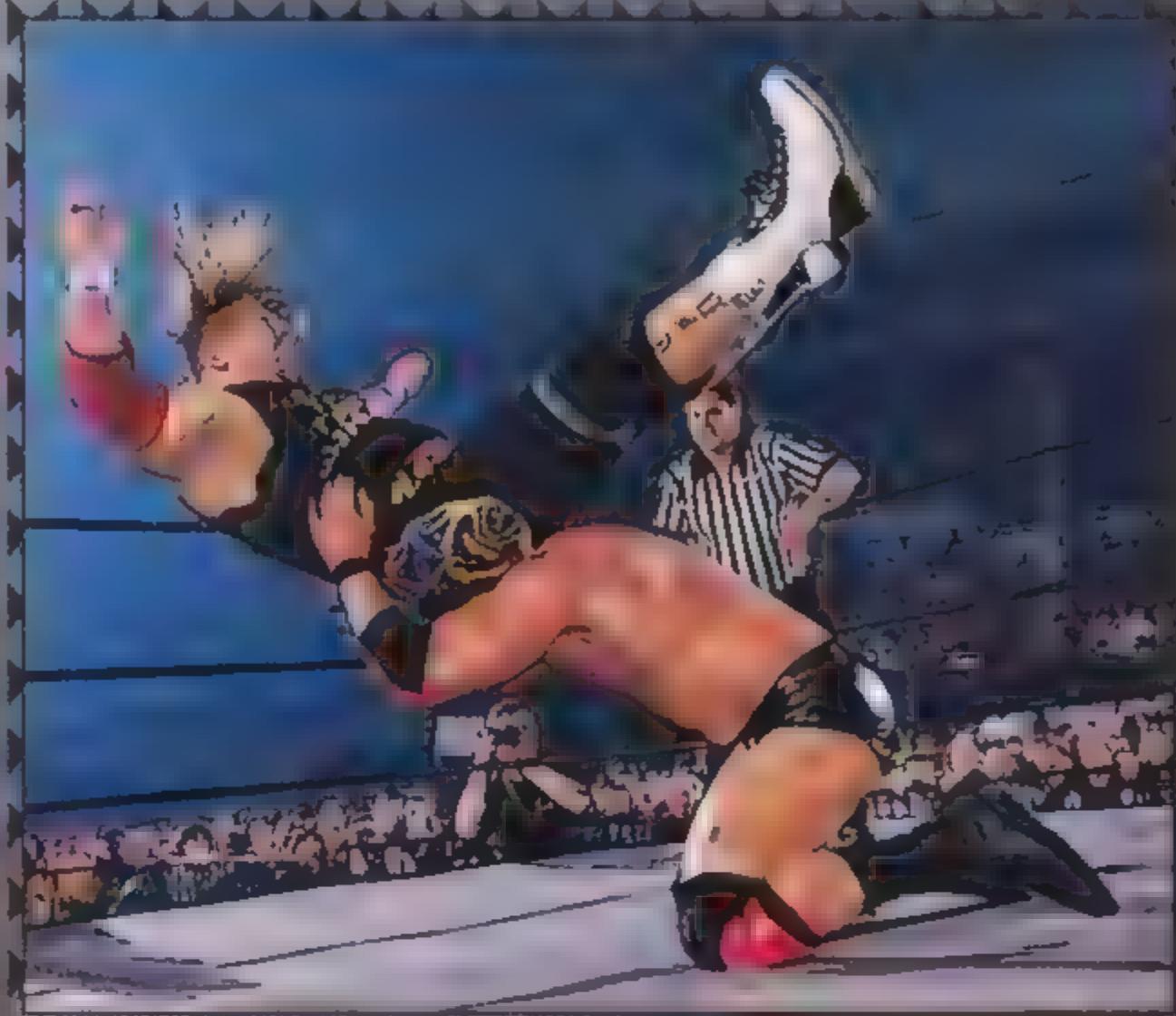
Champion Chavo Guerrero Jr. was in control early, but "Sugar" Shane Helms rebounded with a fistdrop from the second rope. Guerrero then grounded the high-flying challenger by working on his leg. Outside the ring, Guerrero flattened Helms with a splash

from the top turnbuckle onto the floor. Back in the ring, Guerrero attempted to finish off the former 3 Count member by using the VerteBreaker, Helms' finisher. But Helms reversed it and hit a VerteBreaker of his own to win the title.

Team Canada vs. Hugh Morrus and Konnan

After several minutes of spirited action, Team Canada took control, and Lance Storm climbed to the top turnbuckle for a splash. Konnan, however, lifted his foot, striking the descending

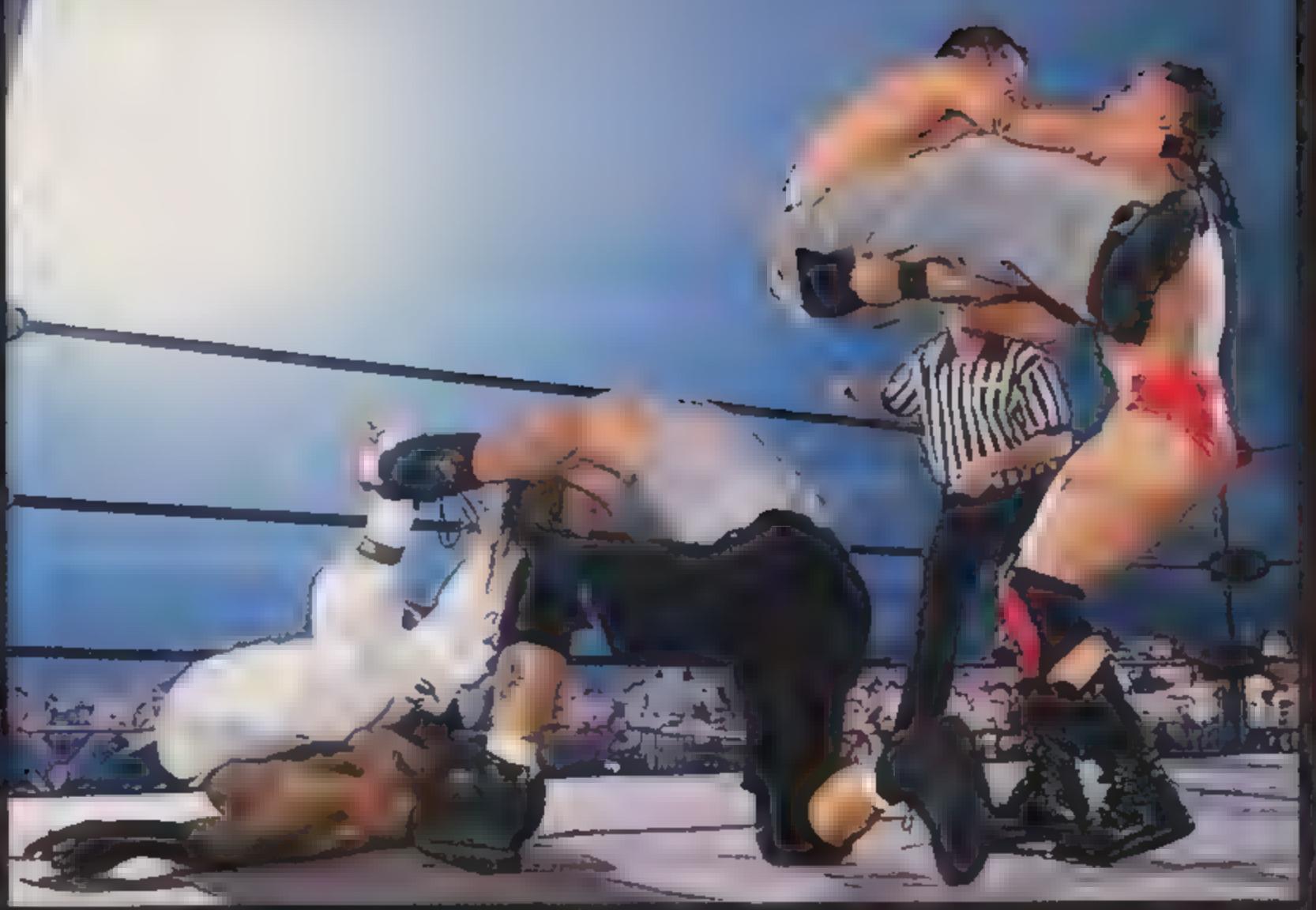
Storm in the face, and tagged Hugh Morrus. Storm then landed a standing side-kick to Morrus' face, allowing Mike Awesome to deliver a running Awesome Bomb for the win.



Shawn Stasiak vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Stasiak came to the ring with Stacy and insulted the crowd before Bigelow came out and chased Stasiak to the floor. After several minutes of stalling from Stasiak, Bigelow caught the "Mecca of Manhood" and landed some stiff shots. After landing his fly-

ing headbutt for a two count, Bigelow attempted the Greetings From Asbury Park. Stacy then jumped onto the ring apron and distracted the referee before throwing a bottle of hair spray to Stasiak. Stasiak then sprayed Bigelow in the eyes to get the win.

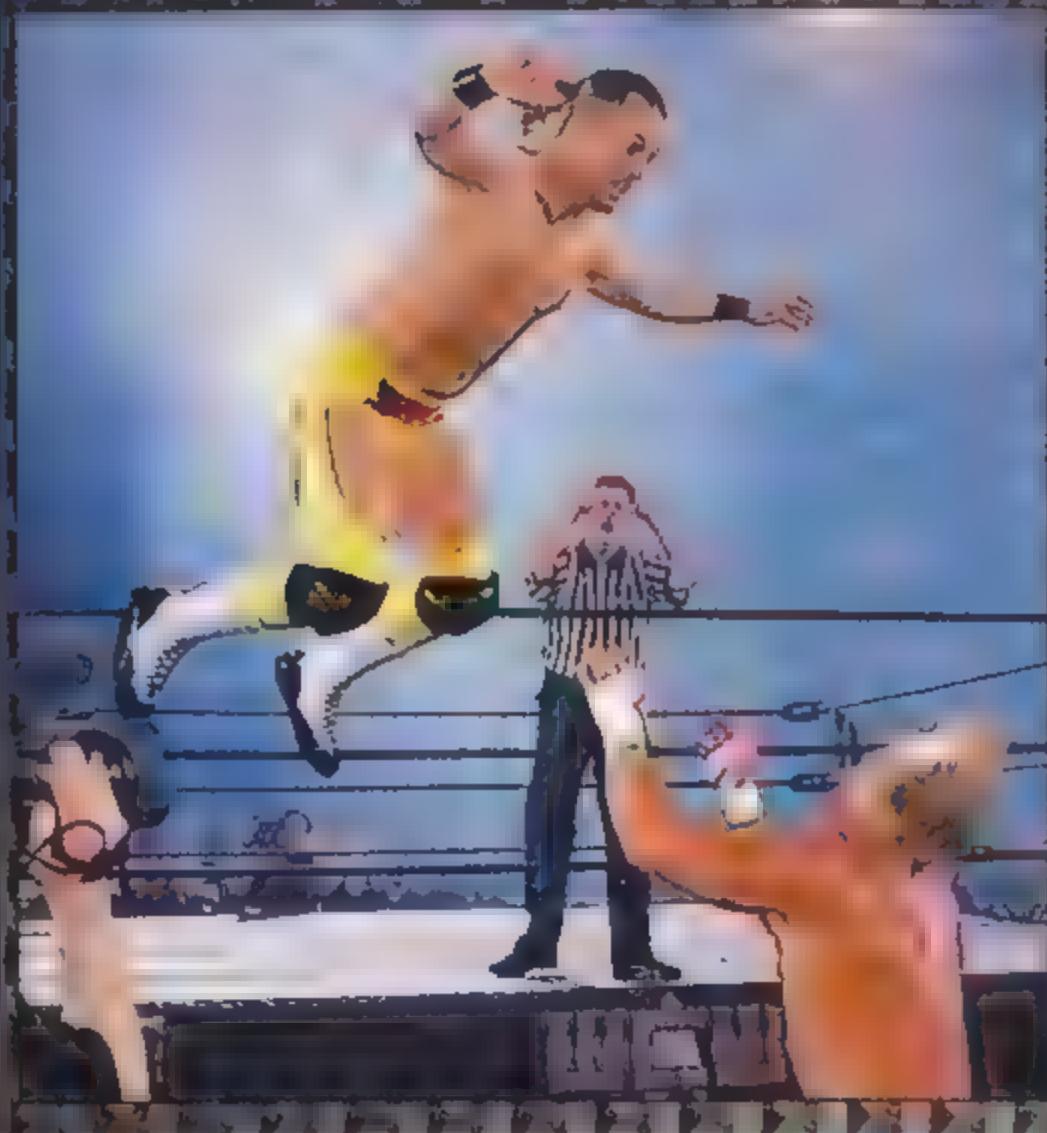
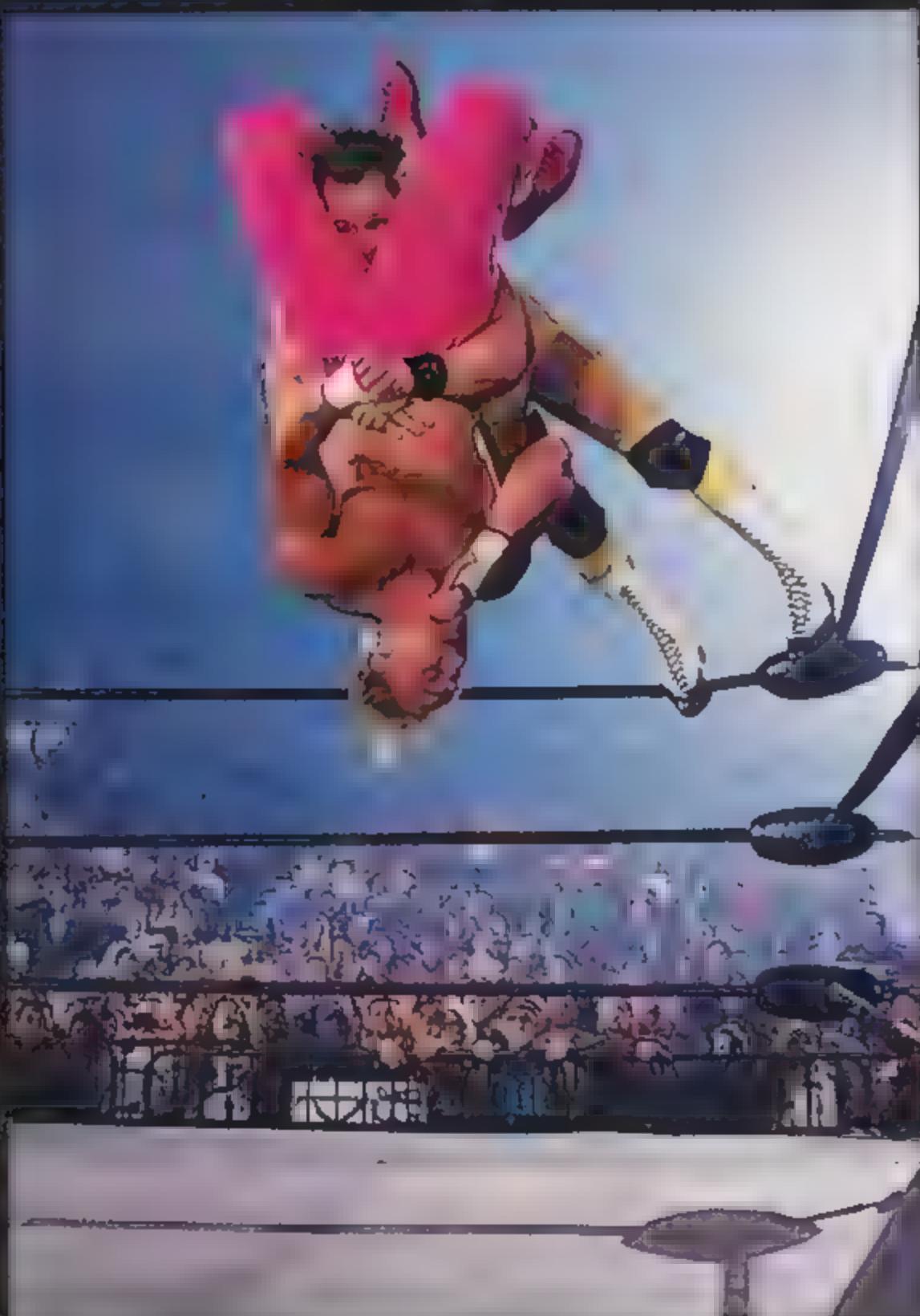


Cruiserweight Tag-Team Title Match

Rey Mysterio Jr. and Billy Kidman took on "Prime Time" Elix Skipper and Kid Romeo in the finals of a tournament to crown the first cruiserweight tag-team champions.

After a quick start by Kidman and Mysterio, Romeo took control with a face smash on Kidman. Kidman

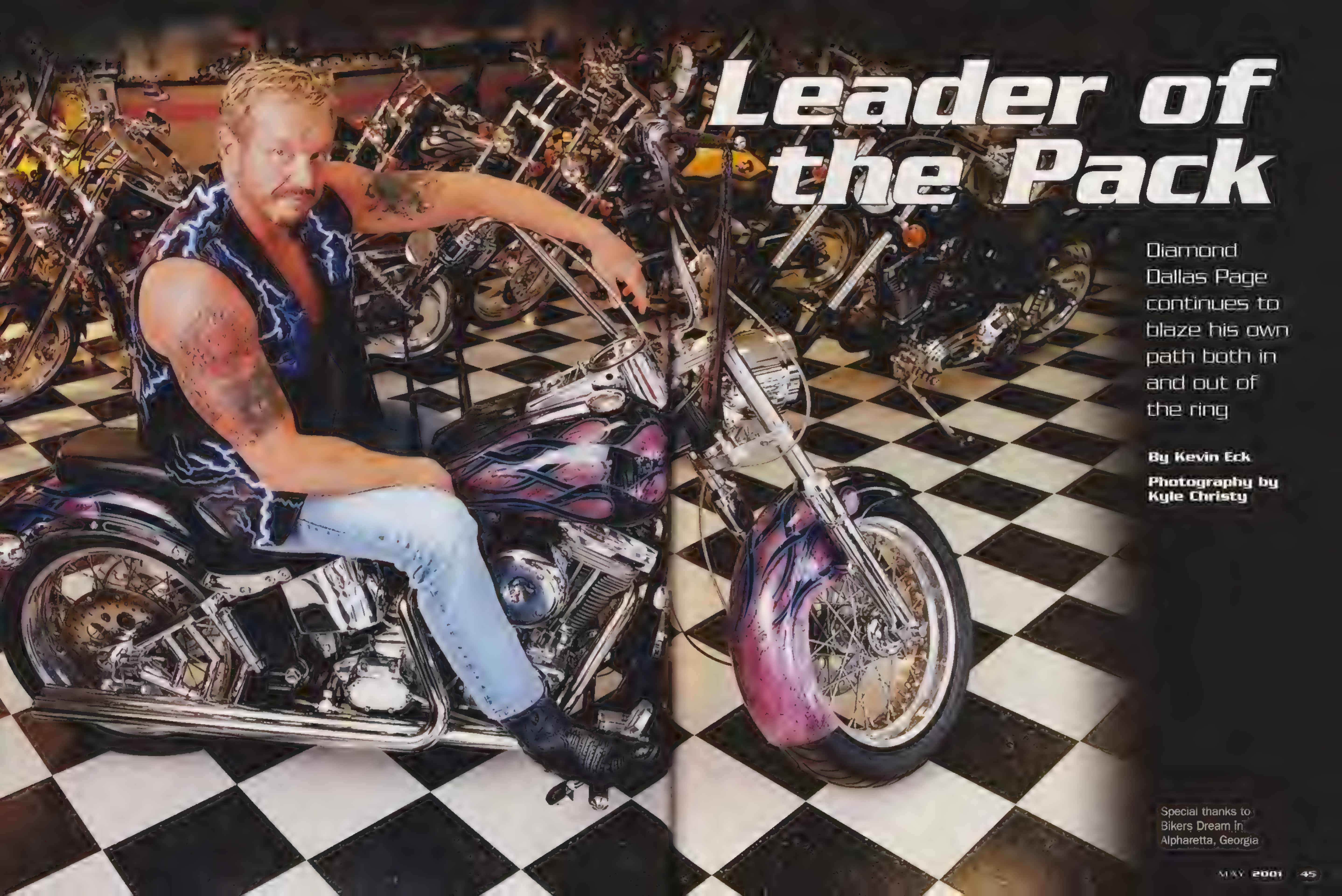
rebounded and leveled Skipper with a sit-out powerbomb from the top rope. After several near falls by Mysterio and Kidman, Mysterio attempted a springboard moonsault, but was caught in mid-air by Romeo, who then landed the Last Kiss for the victory.



Kwee-Wee vs. Jason Jett

Newcomer Jett took control early with a pendulum swing, but Kwee-Wee rebounded by tossing Jett out of the ring. Back inside, Kwee-Wee landed a Northern Lights Suplex for a

two count. Jett played possum as Kwee-Wee went to the top rope for an elbow smash. With Kwee-Wee in mid-air, Jett moved and then hit the Crash Landing for the win.

A man with short blonde hair, wearing a black tank top, is sitting on a white and black motorcycle. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The motorcycle has a custom paint job with purple and pink flames on the side. They are in a room with a black and white checkered floor and walls. In the background, there are several people, some of whom are wearing cowboy hats, suggesting a bar or social gathering.

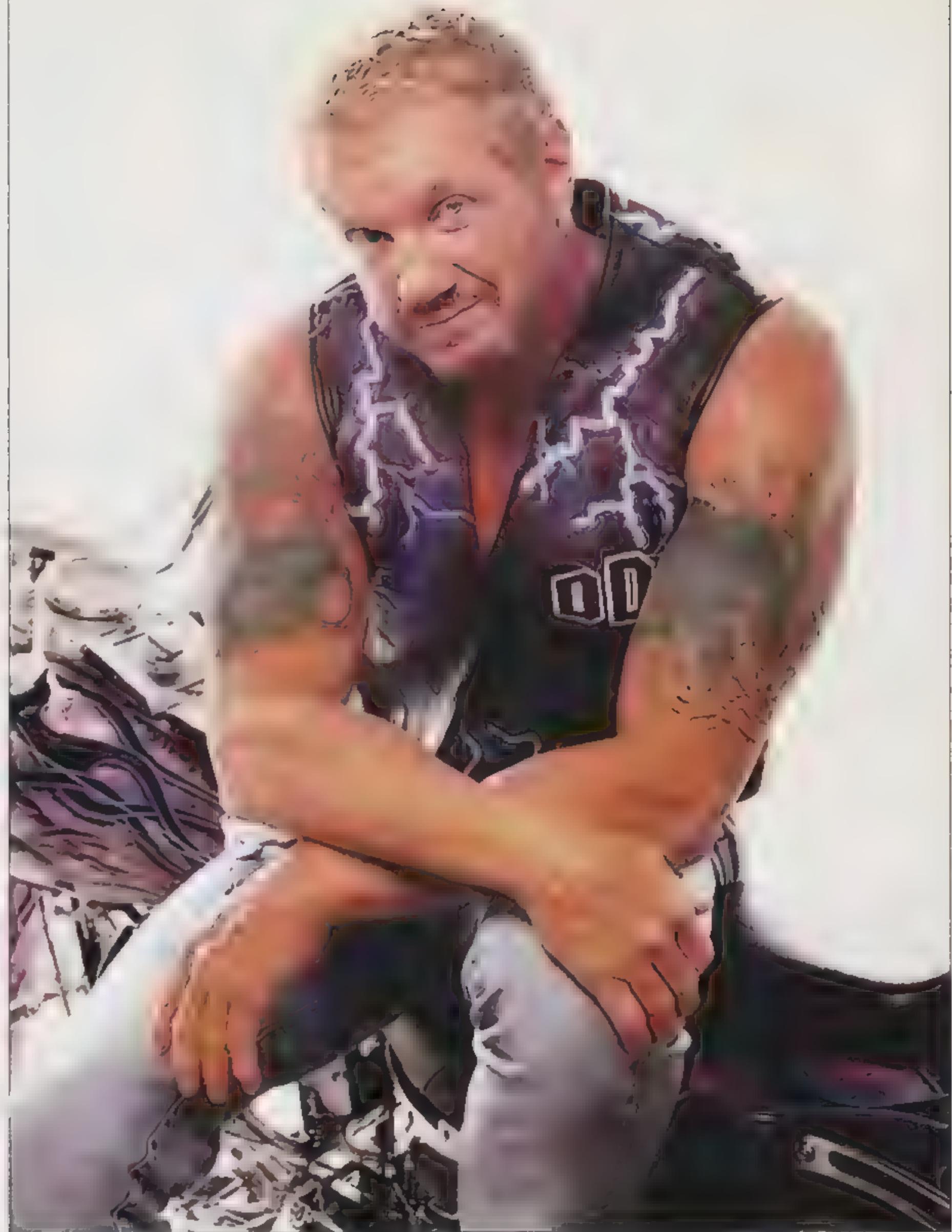
Leader of the Pack

Diamond Dallas Page continues to blaze his own path both in and out of the ring

By Kevin Eck

Photography by
Kyle Christy

Special thanks to
Bikers Dream in
Alpharetta, Georgia



Diamond Dallas Page produces a small, black leather case from his pocket and displays it like a proud father showing off pictures of his newborn child. Page proceeds to allow a glimpse inside his world, the entirety of which he holds in his palm, or to be more precise, his PalmPilot.

Concealed inside Page's electronic organizer are files containing everything from to-do lists, to a collection of caustic one-liners, to detailed concepts of future projects. With all the ideas, thoughts and goals swirling inside Page's head, it's easy to understand why his PalmPilot is never out of reach.

The energetic and perpetually positive Page always is searching for ways to challenge and improve himself. "I've always had the mind-set that there's nothing I can't do,"

he says. "I envision something, and then I make it happen."

At this point, who could possibly bet against him accomplishing anything that he wanted to? Most fans are familiar with the story of how Page decided to become a wrestler at 35, defying the odds and the critics by not only surviving, but also becoming a superstar in the industry. DDP chronicled the details of his compelling life in his autobiography, "Positively Page."

If the book were turned into a movie, one would assume it would climax with Page winning his first world championship at 43. But life doesn't stop after the denouement and the final credits, and Page isn't resting on his laurels. He continues to add new chapters to his success story.

Since returning to WCW last November after a four-month hiatus, Page has never looked better. "What motivates me now in wrestling is that I want to see how long I can perform at this level," says Page, a former three-time WCW world heavyweight champion. "Right now, I feel better than I've ever felt, and I'm in the best shape I've ever been in. That's weird, because I'm also the oldest I've

I couldn't afford to think any older," he says. "That was the first step to thinking in terms of being ageless. I didn't reveal my age in the beginning because I knew everyone was going to tell me that I was too old to be starting a wrestling career."

Although Page is a firm believer that age is a state of mind, he realizes it takes more than just the proper mental attitude to com-

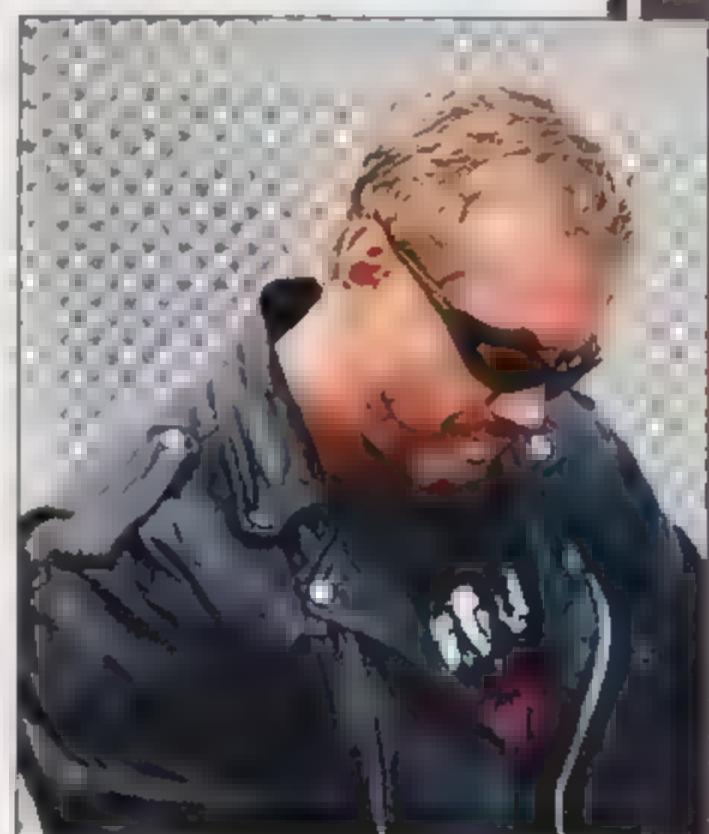


ever been. Every morning, one of my incantations is: 'I will find a way to turn back the hands of time.' Every day, I find another way to make my body feel younger and stronger."

Page's age was a well-guarded secret when he made his in-ring debut, but now he prides himself on the fact he can still steal the show at 45. "When I first started wrestling, I would always say that I was 29 again, because

pete in a physical business with men half his age. During his days off at his home in Marietta, Georgia, Page constantly is rehabbing his body. Yoga, organic juicing, kinesiology, massage therapy and visits to his chiropractor all are part of his regimen.

Some of Page's methods for staying fit are a bit unconventional by wrestling standards, and he takes quite a bit of ribbing





Leader of the Pack *Leader of the Pack* Le

from his peers in the locker room for his eccentricities, but he takes it in stride. "They used to laugh at me," Page says. "Now they bust my chops, but it's in a good-natured way. I know if they're laughing, it's working, because I dare to be different, and that's a huge part of my life."

"If you want to be successful and the masses are going one way, your odds are better going the other. Still be a man of character and do the right thing, but set your own path. You'll hit a lot more potholes, but if you can turn every negative into a positive, you will become very successful."

Although he still has a passion for the wrestling business, Page no longer defines his success solely based on his exploits in the ring. He is determined to broaden his horizons and make a difference beyond the squared circle. In fact, there's so much Page wants to accomplish and learn about—one of his current interests is studying the life of civil rights activist Rosa Parks—that he can't keep track of it all.

This is where his PalmPilot comes in handy. At home, on airplanes or backstage at WCW events, Page can be found inputting information, much of which is in regard to his



GARRET F. WOOD/21



next major goal—becoming a motivational speaker. “I call it ‘elevational speaking’ because I want to take people to another level,” says Page, who plans to start doing speaking engagements and selling tapes called “DDP’s Inside Track” within a year. “There have been athletes and coaches from football, baseball and basketball to do this, but never a wrestler. I want the corporate guy who’s 35, or 45, or 50, to look and me and say, ‘My God, I can’t believe the kind of shape he’s in and that he continues to go at that pace. How does he do it?’ I want to grab people’s emotions and take them on a roller coaster ride like I do in the ring.”

Page has his hand in plenty of other projects as well. Along with his wife Kimberly, he appeared in the movie “Rat Race,” a comedy starring Cuba Gooding Jr.

that is set for a May release, and he’s working on a children’s book called “Positive Affirmations for Kids from A to Z with DDP.” Page also continues to be involved in several charities, including his own “Bang It Out For Books,” which fights illiteracy and promotes the benefits of reading.

When he’s not keeping busy with wrestling or any of the aforementioned undertakings, Page is on a never-ending quest for new experiences. “My wife calls me a Renaissance man because I’m going to the opera with her next month,” says Page, who has been married to Kimberly for almost 10 years. “I wake up every day thinking, ‘What’s the next thing I’m going to learn? What’s the next thing I’m going to discover?’ The bottom line is that I just wake up every day being grateful.” ♦



Rhodes Son

Finally at peace with himself and his legendary father, Dustin Rhodes is poised to achieve his destiny

By Scott Hudson

The Bible relates the parable of the prodigal son, who demands his inheritance early, leaves his father's house and strikes out on his own, only to later return seeking reinstatement into his father's good graces. There are striking similarities between this story and the tale of Dustin Rhodes and his father, the "American Dream" Dusty Rhodes, but there also are cavernous differences.

For a son to follow in the professional footsteps of his father is nothing unusual. If the father is successful, it's almost an expectation. But Dusty Rhodes was not a business owner, physician or accountant. He was a professional wrestler, and growing up the son of one of the most successful wrestlers in the history of the industry was extremely trying for young Dustin. "When I was a kid, I used to get picked on a lot because of who my dad was," Dustin recalls. "He's fat, he's a wrestler, he's no good. I heard it all and it led to many fights. But I never lost one."

Dusty was a wrestling star across the country in the days before cable television and more than a decade before Hulk Hogan began his ascension. The nomadic existence of a professional wrestler in the days of territories did not lend itself to a "Leave It To Beaver" home life. Dusty wrestled on 350 shows per year in

far-flung reaches of the United States while his young son pined away Texas nights longing for more time with his father. "I can remember crying because I wanted to be with him or live with him," says Dustin, who saw his father only two weeks out of the year.

The times Dustin did spend with his father came during his teenage years, and the meaningful meetings still resonate in his head. During these times, Dustin developed what many offspring of wrestling stars deal with—the urge to outdo their famous fathers.

Dustin was born to wrestle, and he knew that. So in 1988, 19-year-old Dustin trained with his father for a scant three months before debuting in Mike Graham and Steve Keirn's Florida Championship Wrestling promotion, wrestling a series of matches with respected veterans Bob Cook, Mark Starr and Jim Backlund.

The television show was taped in a dingy, converted warehouse called the Tampa Sportatorium. "I lived at the Sportatorium," Dustin says with a laugh, "in Mike's office. We made \$20 per show and \$40 during our monthly swing through the Bahamas." Hardly superstar wages, but Dustin knew he had to learn his trade and pay his dues.

During the next two years, a maturing Dustin bounced from Tampa, Florida, to

Memphis, Tennessee, and through Japan before getting a break with the National Wrestling Alliance (a forerunner of WCW) as one-half of the Texas Broncos tag team with another second generation wrestler, Kendall Windham (son of Blackjack Mulligan).

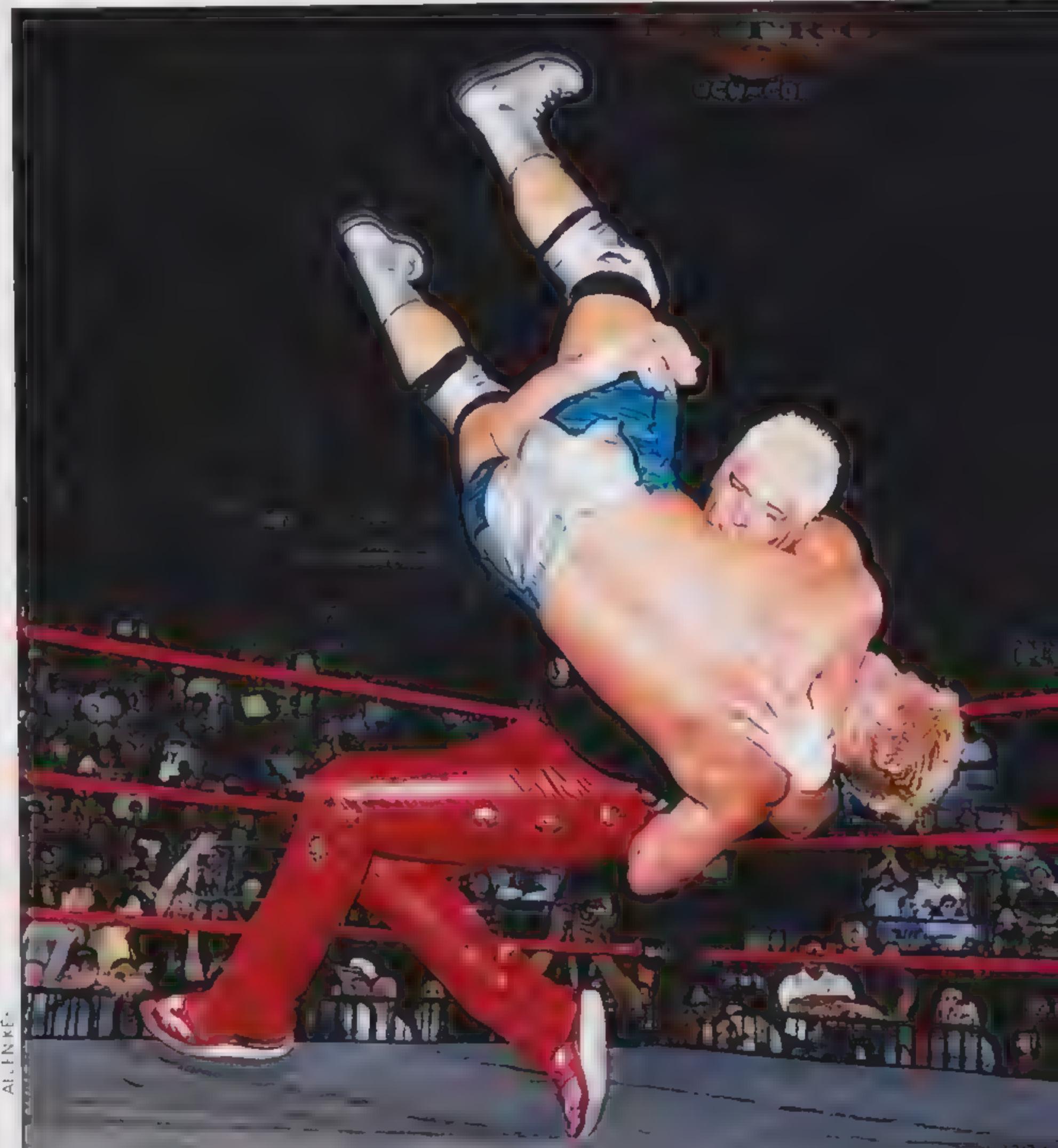
Times were good for Dustin and Dusty, and they bonded as father and son. Even Dusty's jump to the World Wrestling Federation couldn't separate them, as Dustin went with him. They formed a tag team that lasted six months, but Dustin soon joined WCW, where he would enjoy his greatest success yet. Dustin won the U.S. title twice and the tag-team title twice (with Ricky Steamboat and Barry Windham).

Years of simply wishing for nothing more than a long fishing weekend with his father had come true tenfold for Dustin. But that was about to change. In March 1995, Dustin was fired from WCW after his involvement in an

unusual match at the Uncensored pay-per-view. Although the show aired live from Tupelo, Mississippi, Dustin and the Blacktop Bully (Barry Darsow) taped their match—a hardcore battle on the back of a moving flatbed truck—a few days prior in the Georgia mountains. The participants were warned by WCW officials about what was not allowed—bleeding, specifically—during the match, but, to coin a phrase, they went into business for themselves.

Following the contest, Dustin, Darsow and road agent Graham were dismissed from WCW. "That was just one of those things," Dustin says. "That's the way the business was done. All three of us eventually came back and there are no hard feelings."

Following his dismissal from WCW, Dustin returned to the WWF as a solo act and debuted the character known as Goldust. Dustin had a strong four-year run as the



ALL INKED



SCOTT LYNCH/NICHA

With their differences behind them, Dusty and Dustin again are side by side.

androgynous movie buff, including two reigns as Intercontinental champion. It was during this period that Dustin and his father had a falling out. When pressed for the reason behind the split, Dustin, normally an outgoing, friendly man, becomes reserved and introspective. "I'd really rather not talk about the reasons why," he says. "It happened and we got over it."

As Dustin's marriage to Terri Boatwright (former WCW manager Alexandra York and current WWF valet Terri) ended, Dustin returned to Atlanta and bridged a huge gap with a telephone call. "I just picked up the phone and called my dad," says Dustin, who had not spoken to his father in over four years. "It was like we never had a problem. Sons and dads can just do that."

Much to the relief of father and son, all is well now between Dusty and Dustin. In fact, their relationship is better than ever. Dusty, the owner of the independent Turnbuckle Championship Wrestling in Georgia, made a

heroic return to WCW on January 29 at Nitro in Baltimore, and the two embraced before a worldwide television audience.

Dustin now has been in the industry for more than 10 years. And although he's probably lost more blood, sweat and tears than any other person his age in this business, Dustin only became a man when he and his father humbled themselves and finally reconciled.

With Dusty as his mentor, Dustin now appears primed to achieve the dizzying heights of success he feels he was destined for. And as Dustin's 15-year-old-brother Cody approaches the same point in his life as when Dustin decided to enter professional wrestling, the older brother will offer advice on how to be a wrestler, a man and, most importantly, a son. ♦



ALI FAYKH



END GAME

A distinct finishing move is one of the key ingredients to becoming a success in sports entertainment

Buff Bagwell's Buff Blockbuster



In life, the end doesn't always justify the means. On the canvas, however, "the end" justifies a wrestler's popularity and paycheck. Every wrestler tries to establish a distinct finishing hold, and in some instances a good finisher can be the difference between mid-card and main-event status. Just ask Diamond Dallas Page or Goldberg.

Wrestling fans initially weren't impressed when the 35-year-old Page embarked on a career in the ring in 1991 after stints as a manager and announcer. Page's dedication and improving ring skills gradually earned him respect, but the Diamond Cutter put him over the top and on his way to superstardom. Goldberg burst onto the scene and made an immediate impact. The Spear and Jackhammer combination was the perfect exclamation point to Goldberg's displays of brutality.

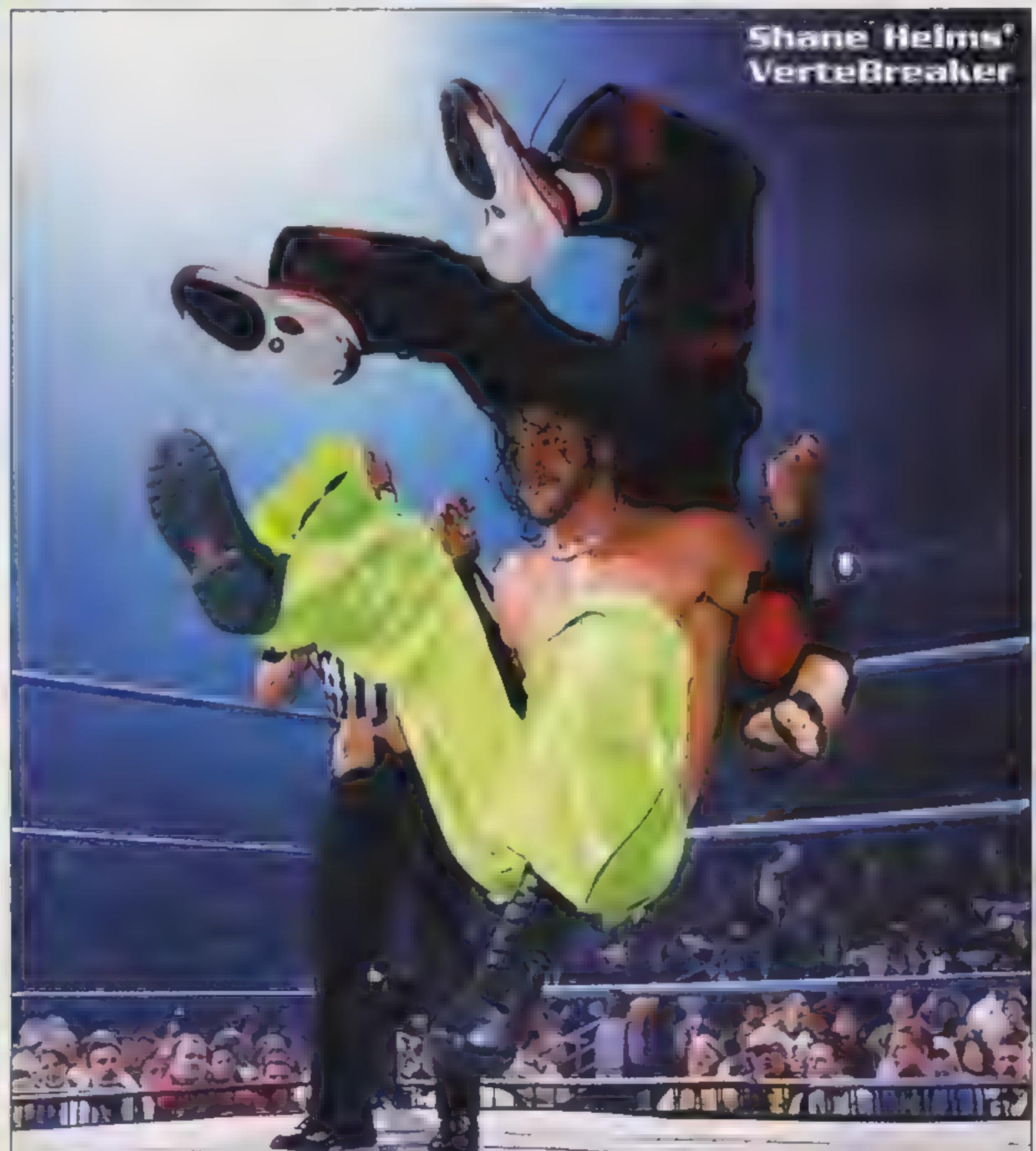
Sometimes a good finisher can be

the final piece to the puzzle. Buff Bagwell created the Buff Blockbuster to punctuate his already impressive arsenal. The Buff Blockbuster proved so impressive that THQ insisted on reworking their WCW/nWo video game to include the finisher, despite having completed the product weeks earlier.

Wrestlers derive their finishing moves by several methods. First, it always is good to go with what you know. With a few simple alterations, moves associated with sports such as football and basketball, and different fighting disciplines, can become tremendous match-ending maneuvers.

Both Goldberg and Hacksaw Jim Duggan were able to exploit their days tackling football dummies by inventing explosive shoulder blocks and tackles for the canvas battlefield. Sting's college basketball experience provided the leaping prowess necessary to master the Stinger Splash, while Tank Abbott's tenure at "Barroom Brawl University" (and boxing gyms) gave his crushing right hook credibility.

Shane Helms' VerteBreaker



Traditional sports certainly have lent sports entertainment some novel ideas, but submission wrestling and the martial arts have had a far greater impact on professional wrestling. The Cat's reverse spin kick, Booker T.'s Bookend (judo's Urimage throw) and Sting's Scorpion Deathlock (a modified Boston Crab) all can be traced back to traditional fighting roots. Other moves can be traced to Greco-Roman wrestling and more obscure disciplines like Brazilian jujitsu and Russian sambo. Even wrestling's classic sleeperhold is a variation of choke holds used in submission-based styles.

Of course, wrestlers don't have to look any further than their own genre of sports entertainment when searching for a signature move. Not only have current wrestlers

adopted classic moves from some of American wrestling's all-time greats (Ric Flair, for example, gained both his nickname and figure-four leglock finisher from "Nature Boy" Buddy Rogers, a top star in the 1950s and '60s), but they also have found many innovative holds overseas and in Mexico. Chavo Guerrero Jr.'s Hurricane DDT once was the sole property of his father when Chavo Sr. wrestled in Mexico, and Scott Steiner's famous Frankensteiner was a Mexican-born move known as a hurracanrana.

Japan's influence has been equally important. Billy Kidman fans flip over his Shooting Star Press, a move first perfected by Jushin "Thunder" Liger in Japan. Fellow cruiserweight Shane Helms discovered his



**Scott Steiner's
Steiner Recliner**



**Randy Savage's
Flying Elbow**

Jeff Jarrett's Stroke



VerteBreaker finisher while watching tapes from Japan as well. "I saw it five years ago and have always wanted to use it," Helms says. "I played with it for a while, and when I debuted it I knew it was going to be huge."

Sometimes a move can be a mixture of several international influences. Page's Diamond Cutter was based on a move called the Ace Crusher, made famous by current WCW booker Johnny Ace while Ace was touring Japan. Veteran British wrestler Steven Regal helped Page personalize the finisher by teaching Page a different way to grip the head, using an amateur hold called a cravat. Despite putting a different spin on the hold, Page asked Ace for permission to use it. "I had no problem with Page using it," Ace says. "Some guys think a move belongs to them, but all moves really are a variation of others."

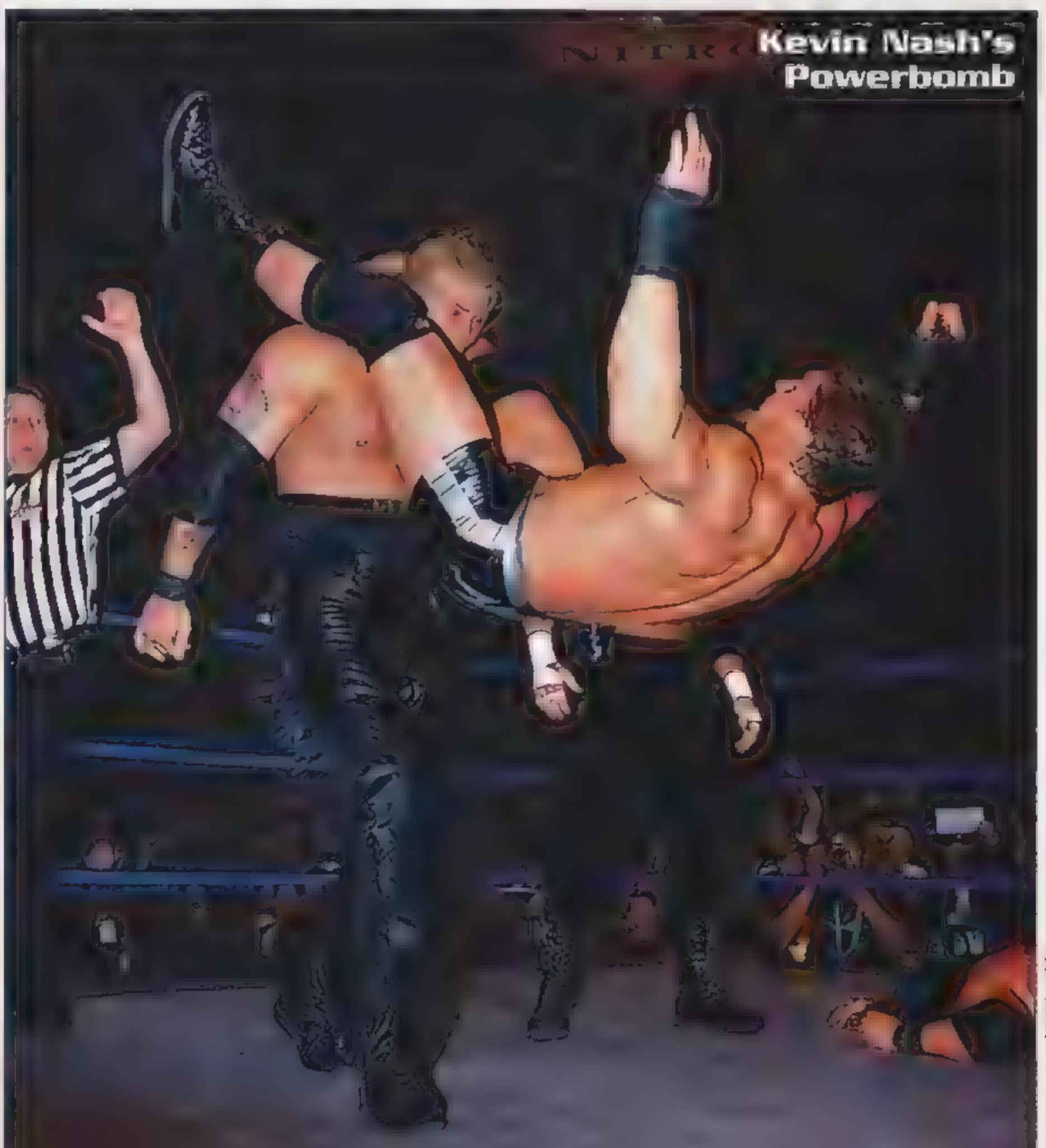
The success of finishing moves

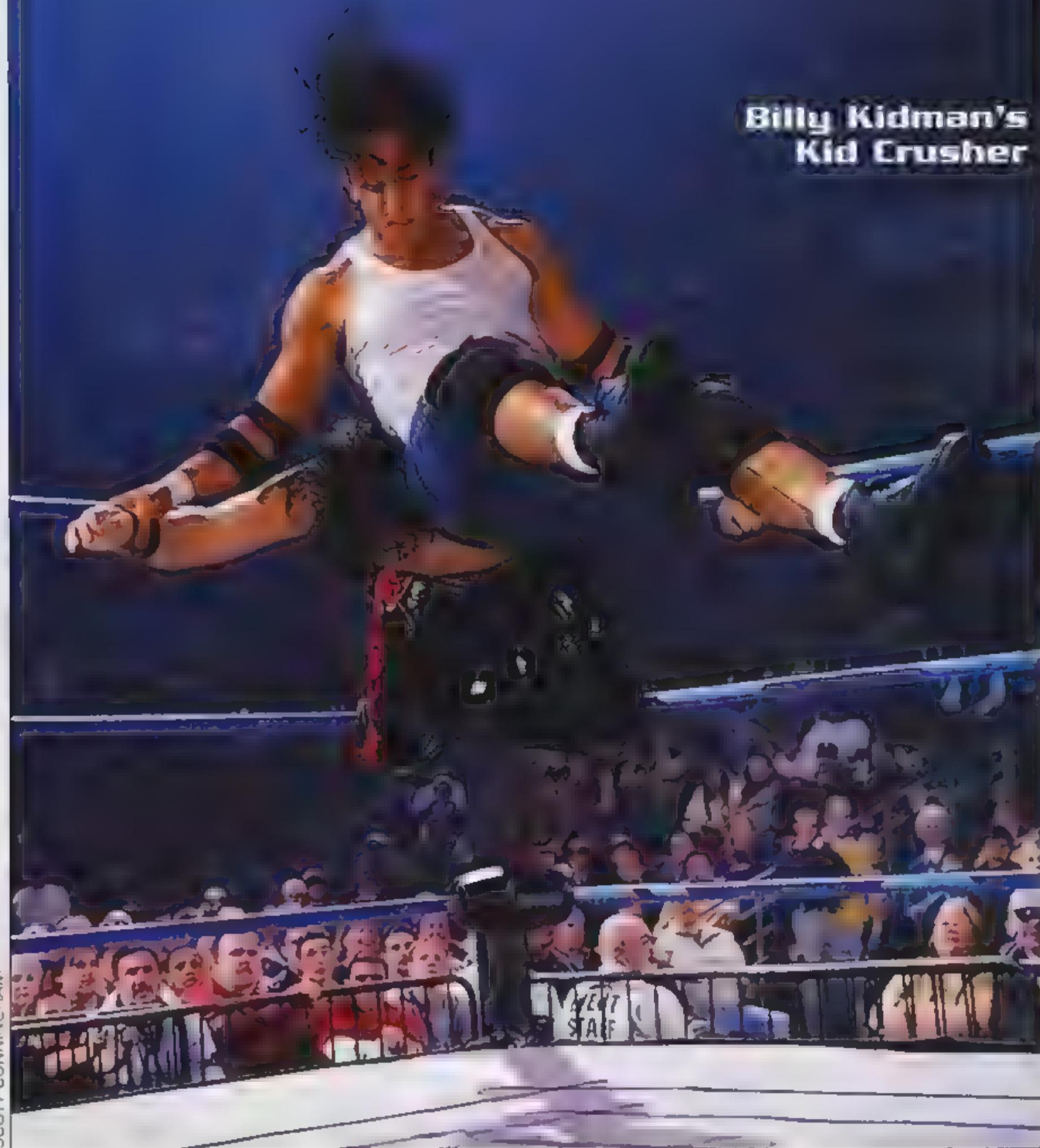
like the Diamond Cutter has led many wrestlers to invent finishers through modification, innovation and, sometimes, dumb luck. Facilities like the Power Plant, WCW's training facility in Smyrna, Georgia, have allowed wrestlers a laboratory for such experimentation.

When deciding on a finisher, wrestlers have to take a number of factors into account. First and foremost, a successful move should look painful for the recipient, but it shouldn't leave the victim applying ice bags in the locker room. "No one wants to end a guy's career," says Mike Sanders, creator of the 3.0. "I'm sure hitting a guy with a sledgehammer would look great, but that doesn't mean it's a good finisher. The real challenge is delivering the illusion."

At times, the illusion has become all too real. Because of nagging leg injuries in 1999, Randy "Macho Man" Savage was forced to make modifications on his trademark elbow drop from the top rope, and he ended up sending both Evan Karagias and referee Charles

Kevin Nash's Powerbomb





Billy Kidman's Kid Crusher

Robinson to the emergency room. Both of the Steiner brothers have seen their moves deliver unfortunate results, too. During a WCW Saturday Night taping in 1998, Scott caused Ray Traylor to black out, compliments of the Steiner Recliner. That same year, Rick's top-rope bulldog nearly ended the career of Bagwell, who suffered four broken cervical bones in his neck as a result of the move.

In some cases a wrestler is forced to retire a hold because of the danger involved. "That's how I tore my anterior cruciate ligament," says The Cat, when discussing his former finisher, a spinning kick off the top rope. "It was difficult to keep everybody safe. If the guy wasn't in perfect position, I would compensate and endanger myself." Then there's Johnny the Bull, who debuted and retired his suicide legdrop all in the same night—the high-risk maneuver resulted in him busting his pelvis.

Beyond the safety factor, a good finisher is easy to execute and can be applied to anyone, regardless of size. Page's Diamond Cutter, Jeff

Jarrett's Stroke, Kidman's Kid Crusher and Lance Storm's Canadian Maple Leaf all are textbook examples.

The ultimate goal of the finisher, of course, is to get a reaction from the crowd. Powerful wrestlers such as Kevin Nash and Sid Vicious, who both use the Powerbomb, make a ritual out of their moves, allowing crowd participation to crescendo as their foes crash to the mat.

Often the charisma of the wrestler supercedes the logic of his finisher. Ronnie Garvin's Garvin Stomp didn't look all that damaging (he would methodically stomp with one foot on a prone foe from head to toe), but it thrilled fans in the National Wrestling Alliance in the 1980s. And has there ever been a more basic finisher than Hulk Hogan's legdrop? Probably not, but fans pop for it—and that's all that matters.

In the final analysis, a finisher exists as a mere extension of its applicator. Ultimately, fans decide who and what moves them and captures their imagination. ♦



KEEPING IT REAL

Konnan's love of rap music and his aspirations as a performer are anything but a gimmick

By Chad Damiani

Photography by
Scott Cunningham



In a tan shed behind the swimming pool and children's swing set in the backyard of his Chula Vista, California, home, Carlos Ashenoff—known to wrestling fans as Konnan—keeps thousands of dollars worth of extravagant capes, glittered jackets and colored tights. The shed's plywood ceiling houses more than a dozen Lucha Libre masks won from foes during his incredibly successful wrestling career in Mexico. These symbols of tradition that hang lifeless on carpeter nails represent Konnan's almost-mythic status in Mexico.

"It's hard to describe just how popular wrestling was in Mexico," says Konnan, as he examines a matching leopard suit and mask enveloped in protective plastic. "We would sell out buildings constantly, sometimes two in a day. The big stars appeared on television and were treated like true superstars."

Not only was Konnan part of Mexico's wrestling revolution a decade ago, but the Miami native experienced more crossover success than legends like Perro Aguayo and newer sensations such as Vampiro. At the peak of his popularity, Konnan had roles in three TV soap operas, appeared on major TV talk and variety shows and embarked on a musical mission that has become his passion. "In 1991 a lot of the wrestlers were involved in a Christmas album, and I asked to do a rap," Konnan says. "The producer liked it so much that he offered me an album deal."

"I'd been into rap music since I was young. I used to compete in break-dancing contests, and kids in the neighborhood

would always challenge each other to rap battles after school. There was lots of competition, and I always wanted to take it a step further."

Konnan's first LP, "La Ley De Konnan" (Konnan's law), produced a No. 1 single in Mexico ("La Mini Cumbia"), sold-out tour dates and a series of high-profile television performances. But his latest musical project is his most serious and challenging as an artist. Konnan, fellow WCW wrestler Rey Mysterio Jr., established rapper Mad One and producer Elow Zapata have formed the group Filtered Souls. Mixing Latin bounce, the West Coast sound and Konnan's street knowledge, the San Diego-based quartet has spent the last year creating "Ghetto Gladiator"—an 18-track CD ready for distribution—and has began production on a second effort.

The relationship between these four men, and Konnan's decision to return to his music, goes back several years. Despite their age and style differences, Konnan and Mysterio became close friends and helped turn Mexico's AAA promotion into an nWo-type pop culture phenomenon before they joined WCW. Konnan's success earned him a spot in the nWo Wolspac alongside some of the biggest names in wrestling, such as

Kevin Nash, Lex Luger and Randy "Macho Man" Savage. Teamed with main eventers in the nWo, Konnan decided to return to music to forge his own image.

In Mexico, "K-Dogg" used wrestling to promote his rap career. In the United States, however, music provided the perfect medium to elevate his in-ring status. "I wanted to do something to define myself," Konnan says. "Kevin, Lex and Randy were such huge legends. I didn't want to be in their shadow, like Syxx (wrestler Sean Waltman). He was so talented, but he never was able to break out from under Scott Hall and Kevin's shadow. I had created the homeboy persona, which I felt was very successful, but I didn't feel that was enough."

While Konnan was tweaking his image, Mad One and Zapata were earning their spots in the music industry on studio projects in San Diego. "I started rapping at 14, and had already put together two albums when I met Konnan," Mad One says. "Konnan was looking for people to do music with on the West Coast and he heard me rapping on somebody's reel. He started asking questions, and eventually we got together and recorded 'Psyco.'"

Konnan vividly remembers the first



time he saw Mad One perform. "I really believe that Mad One is one of the best MCs out there right now, and anyone who knows me will tell you that I don't compliment someone just because they're a friend," he says.

The "Psyco" video played on WCW television for nearly three months and garnered attention from the music industry. Both Tommy Boy and Rap-A-Lot Records approached Konnan with potential recording deals (both fell through, due to Konnan's WCW commitments).

Enthused by the response, Konnan decided to record a second song—an entrance theme that would involve more of his personal input—and called upon Mad One again. This time, Zapata was commissioned to create the track. In a matter of weeks, "Bow Wow Wow" was playing in arenas across the country.

With Mysterio preparing to lose his Lucha Libre mask and eager to get involved (Mysterio appeared sans mask in the video), the foursome decided to take their partnership to the next level. "Elow is an amazing producer who really helped introduce Latin beats into my

Konnan, flanked by Filtered Souls partners Zapata and Mad One, is as passionate in the recording studio as he is in the ring.





music and helped expand my versatility as a rapper," Konnan says. "There was no question that along with Mad One and Rey, we could make something happen."

Fast forward to 2001, the year that promises the debut of Filtered Soul's CD. "For the first time in my career, I really took my time on a project," Zapata says. "We wanted everyone to know that we could do anything at the drop of an idea. This project isn't about a superstar that doesn't have respect for the game. It's about all of us, and every track has something to say."

The industry seems to be listening. Filtered Souls is considering several distribution deals—but the group plans to exhibit the same patience in business as they did in creation. "This isn't a gimmick," Konnan says. "I thought rap could help my wrestling, but I always did this—and will continue doing this—for the love of the music."

Considering the buzz surrounding the new CD, Konnan might need to add another shed in the back. A simple structure built to hold gold records, rap memorabilia and, yes, even more outlandish outfits. ♦

A wooden body plate, hand-painted costumes, elaborate masks and colorful posters are reminders of Konnan's legendary wrestling career in Mexico. He even was the main character in a series of comic books.



A Touch of Class

Carmel Macklin, a.k.a. Ms. Jones, proves that confidence and integrity can be quite attractive

By Jennifer Williams

Photography by Edward M. Pio Roda





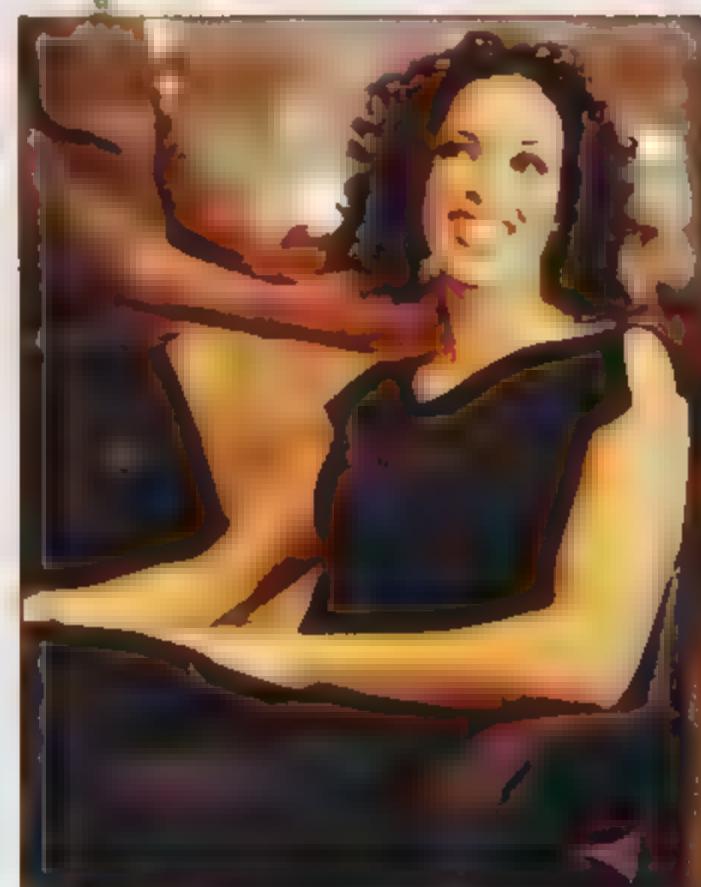
WCW MAGAZINE spent a day with Carmel at some of her favorite spots in Atlanta. We joined her at the beauty salon, went shopping in eclectic Little Five Points and cruised the city in a stretch limousine.

Carmel Macklin has seen the extremes women will go to in order to be perceived as beautiful. Anorexia, bulimia and excessive plastic surgery have become all too common, especially for women and young girls seeking fame and fortune in the entertainment industry. Macklin, however, has managed to find success on her own terms in a business in which image is everything.

Born to a white mother and a black father, Macklin, WCW's Ms. Jones, was instilled with confidence and a strong sense of self-worth at an early age. Those attributes helped Macklin endure taunting from other children about her racial identity and her lanky frame. "I was called every name in the book," she says. "But as long as you know who you are and your parents instill that type of confidence in you, it won't bother you as much."

Macklin's self-assurance also equipped her to chase her dream of becoming a dancer. Although she had been dancing since she was a child, Macklin didn't pursue her passion as a profession until after graduating from Temple University with a degree in psychology. It was at that point the Pittsburgh native moved to Atlanta, where she worked as a marketing





manager for Gatorade during the day and went on dance auditions for music videos in the evening.

Macklin was one of hundreds of women who competed in the 1999 Nitro Girl Search. Although she didn't win, Macklin impressed Nitro Girls manager/choreographer Alto Gary, who contacted her a month later and offered her a spot with the Nitro Girls. "I kept praying that God would lead me to where I needed to be, so when Alto called, I was ecstatic," says Macklin, who was known as Chameleon in the dance troupe.

Once Macklin made it to WCW, her career

took another turn. After seven months as a Nitro Girl, Ernest "The Cat" Miller asked her to become his valet, and she happily agreed. "I was nervous, because as a Nitro Girl, you know what you're going to do: you're going to dance," she says. "But as a valet, you're in the story, and you don't know what you're going to be doing. You can wrestle one time, just walk out to the ring another time, say a few lines or be off for a week. But Ernest helped me feel comfortable with the transition."

As Macklin adjusted to her new role, she and Miller focused on the development of her character, Ms. Jones. "Ernest wanted a strong,

PHOTO BY ALICE COOPER FOR EW.COM



attractive, feminine character, not the stereotypical black woman with an attitude," she says.

Not perpetuating stereotypes and serving as a positive role model are priorities for Macklin. "I think that people who say they aren't role models are just coping out," she says. "Even if you're not on TV or an athlete or anything like that, having young people looking at you makes you a role model. Now that I'm on TV, I'm a role model to more people. I take that into consideration."

She believes it's important to show that female characters in sports entertainment can

be more than just I&A. "A lot of people suggested that I wear less clothing to get over," Macklin says. "I didn't do it because I don't want to be portrayed that way. I'm stylish and classy, and that's the type of character I wanted to portray. If you have a trashy image, people treat you like trash."

Macklin also has resisted the temptation of surgically enhancing her body to advance her career, and she encourages women and young girls to love and accept themselves for who they are and how they look. "I will never get breast implants, although that's not to say that



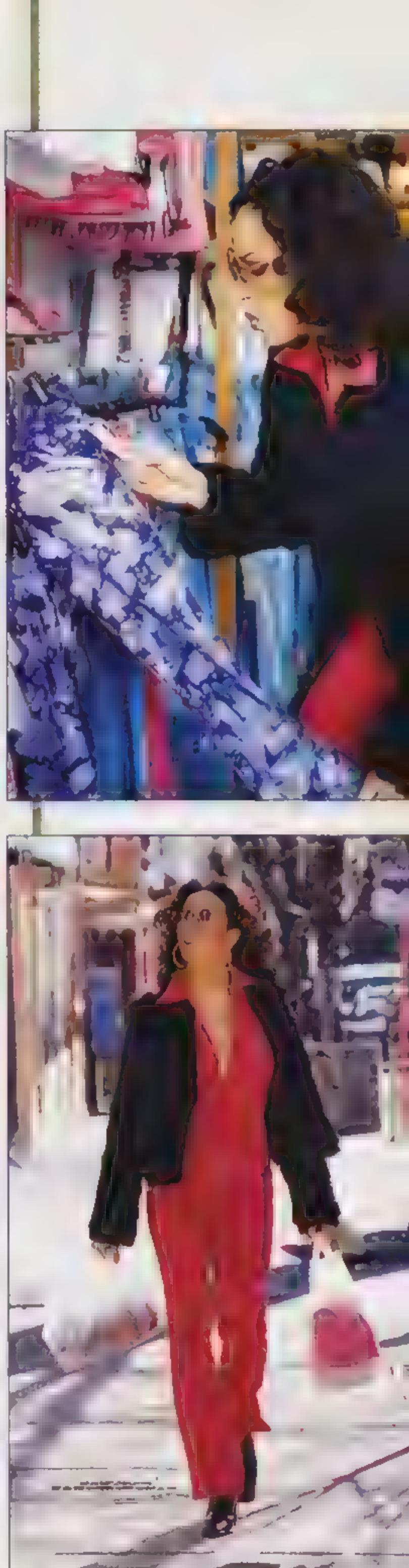
I've never thought about changing my body," she says. "This society is male-oriented, and a lot of women's self-perceptions are based on how men look at them and treat them. I struggle with that all the time because I see myself on TV and I think, 'These clothes will look better if I have a bigger this or bigger that.'

"But once you start changing yourself, you'll never be satisfied with who you are because it's a deeper issue. If you're OK with yourself and you know that you're beautiful, you can fight those insecurities. That's why we have to have more role models who don't change their bodies. Our children will see that they can be OK with how they look and who they are."

With aplomb and ambition in abundance, Macklin has set her goals beyond the realm of professional wrestling. In addition to seeking a

career in acting, she also is interested in going to graduate school. "I would go for my MBA (Masters in Business Administration) or to law school," she says. "I don't want to practice law, but I love to learn about laws and peoples' rights. I plan on teaching people who can't afford lawyers or don't have the resources to find lawyers about their rights and the laws."

Macklin hopes to serve as an inspiration to others regardless of where her career leads her. "I think that everyone has a plan mapped out for their lives," she says. "If you try to be the best that you can be and follow God's path for you, where you are is where you're supposed to be. Never think that you can't do anything, no matter what socioeconomic background you came from. There are enough people out here who have gone from nothing to something. You just have to go for it." ♦



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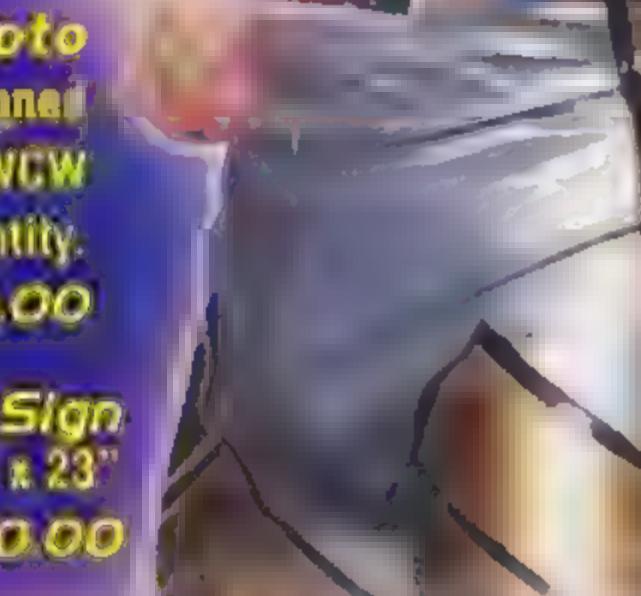
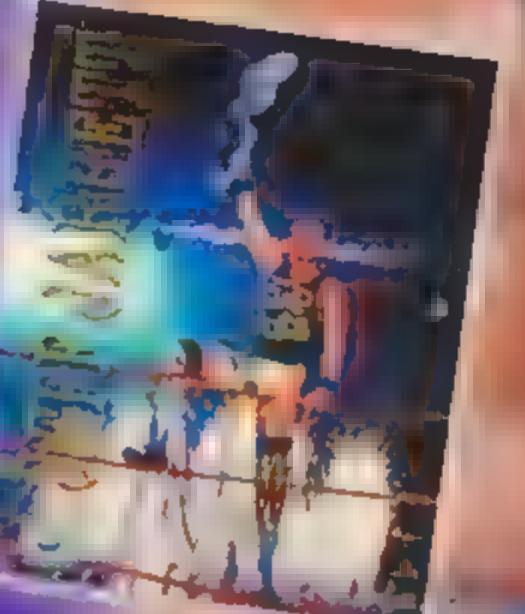
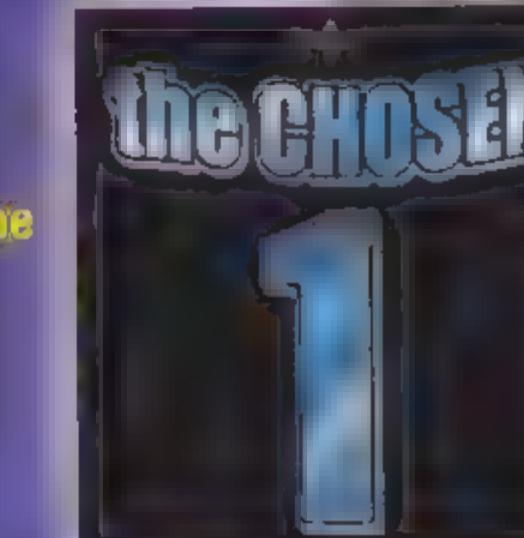
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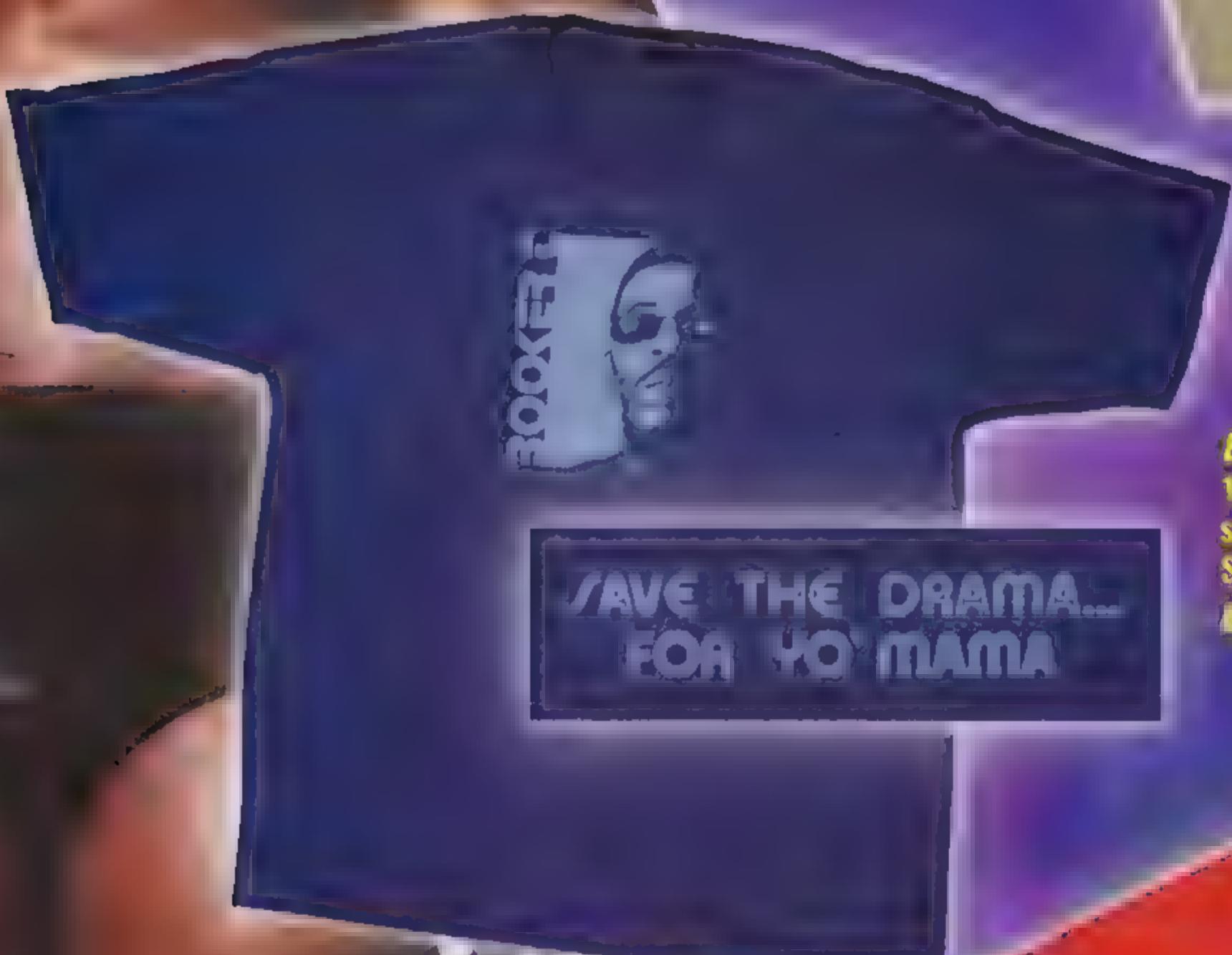
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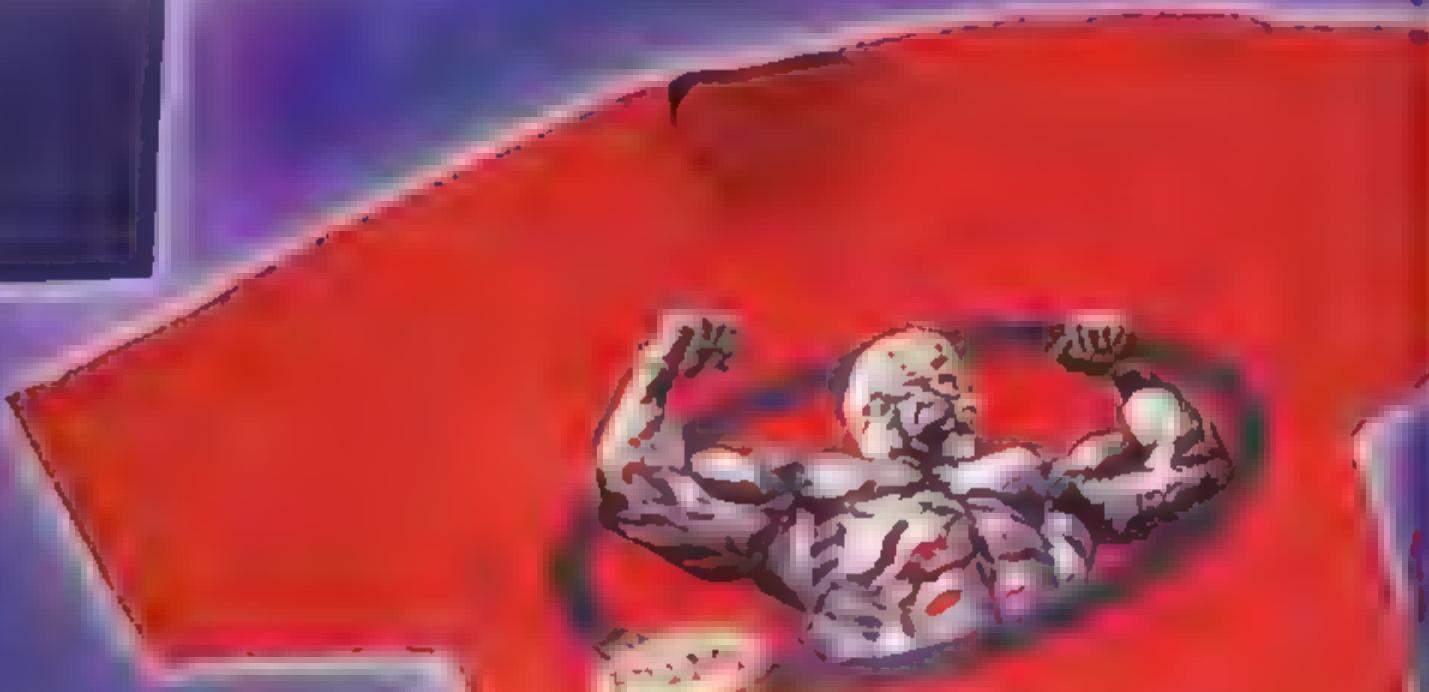
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Two Questions

Kelley Marie, a fan from Winchester, Virginia, poses the following questions for this month's interview. She asks:

- 1.** What is your favorite movie?

- 2.** When traveling, what is your favorite restaurant?

Chavo Guerrero Jr.

- 1.** "Braveheart." It's just a great movie
- 2.** Outback Steakhouse. You can get a good meal at a good price.

Sean O'Haire

- 1.** "Boondock Saints." It's a movie about the Irish Mafia and it has plenty of violence
- 2.** McDonald's. I love the toys that come with the Happy Meals

Booker T.

- 1.** "Rambo: First Blood Part II." I liked the action. It was highly intense, just like Booker T. is in the ring
- 2.** The Cracker Barrel. They have the best breakfast in the world



Booker T.

Hugh Morris



Hugh Morris

- 1.** "The Sons of Katie Elder." John Wayne is just awesome in it
- 2.** My room, because everyone always is trying to --

Dustin Rhodes

- 1.** "Star Wars." I like George Lucas, and that trilogy was the best ever
- 2.** Actually, E.T. -- he has me on a diet, but I like it

Lance Storm

- 1.** "The Shawshank Redemption." It was a hell of a story. It's a drama
- 2.** The Cracker Barrel. It has phenomenal food; I love it

Diamond Dallas Page

- 1.** "Tombstone." I feel like I knew Doc Holiday since I used to play with Jake "The Snake" Roberts. I liked all the characters in the movie, especially "It's a Wonderful Life."
- 2.** Cracker Barrel. I'm a big breakfast person, and it's the only place that can cook eggs like them.

Shawn Stasiak

1. "Back to the Future." When I watched it I just thought it was really cool. It would be cool to be able to go back in time.
2. Outback Steakhouse. When you travel as much as we do, you're exposed to a lot of crappy restaurants. Outback has good food at a reasonable price.

Mark Jindrak

1. "Above the Rim." I like watching movies about basketball in the city. And it had Tupac Shakur in it, and I like him.
2. McDonald's. I'm at the point that my diet can still handle that type of food. Sometimes the worse I eat, the better I look.

Norman Smiley

1. "Raging Bull." Robert De Niro is the greatest actor. The transition he made from looking like an actual boxer to being an old drunk was fantastic.
2. Waffle House, only because of the hours they keep and the number of locations they have throughout the country.

Shannon Moore

1. The entire "Friday the 13th" series. I love all those movies because they're scary and keep you on the edge of your seat. I also like the gore.
2. Outback Steakhouse. I get the Outback Special every time because I know I'll get good, quality food.

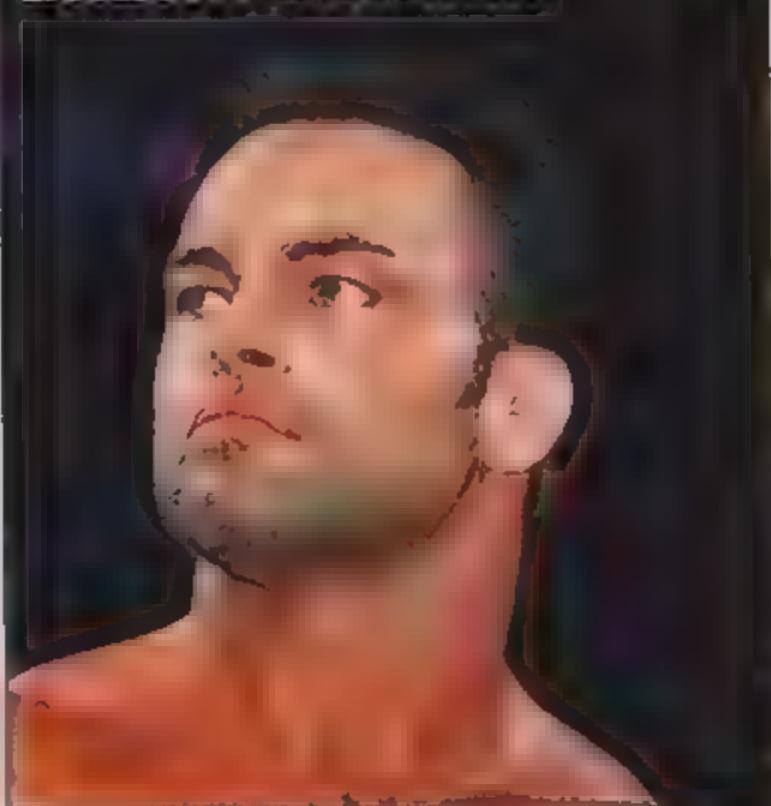
Rey Mysterio Jr.

1. "Heat." I love the action and I love the characters. Robert De Niro, Al Pacino and Val Kilmer all are in it. It's a great movie.
2. Outback Steakhouse. I like the steak and the 22-ounce beer. I also get a bucket of shrimp.

Chuck Palumbo

1. "Goodfellas." It's an action, drama and comedy all rolled into one.

Shawn Stasiak



Rick Steiner

1. "Silence of the Lambs." I just like the Hannibal Lecter character.
2. Sabatino's in Baltimore. It's Italian, and they give you a ton of food that's really good.

The Cat

1. "Lady Sings the Blues." It showed the struggle of someone getting to the top and then struggling to stay on top. Diana Ross, who portrayed Billie Holiday, was awesome.
2. Hotel restaurants. They are easy and convenient.

Mike Awesome

1. It's a toss up between "Platoon," "Scarface" and "Young Guns II." They all are action-packed and suspenseful.
2. The hotel, because it's quick, easy and convenient. ♦

Do you have Two Questions for WCW personalities? Submit them by e-mail to: two.questions@turner.com

Animal

1. Rocky. It's a kid from the city, and it's the story of the underdog making it to the top.
2. Anywhere that has meat. In the South it's the Waffle House. You can get anything you want there.

Alex Wright

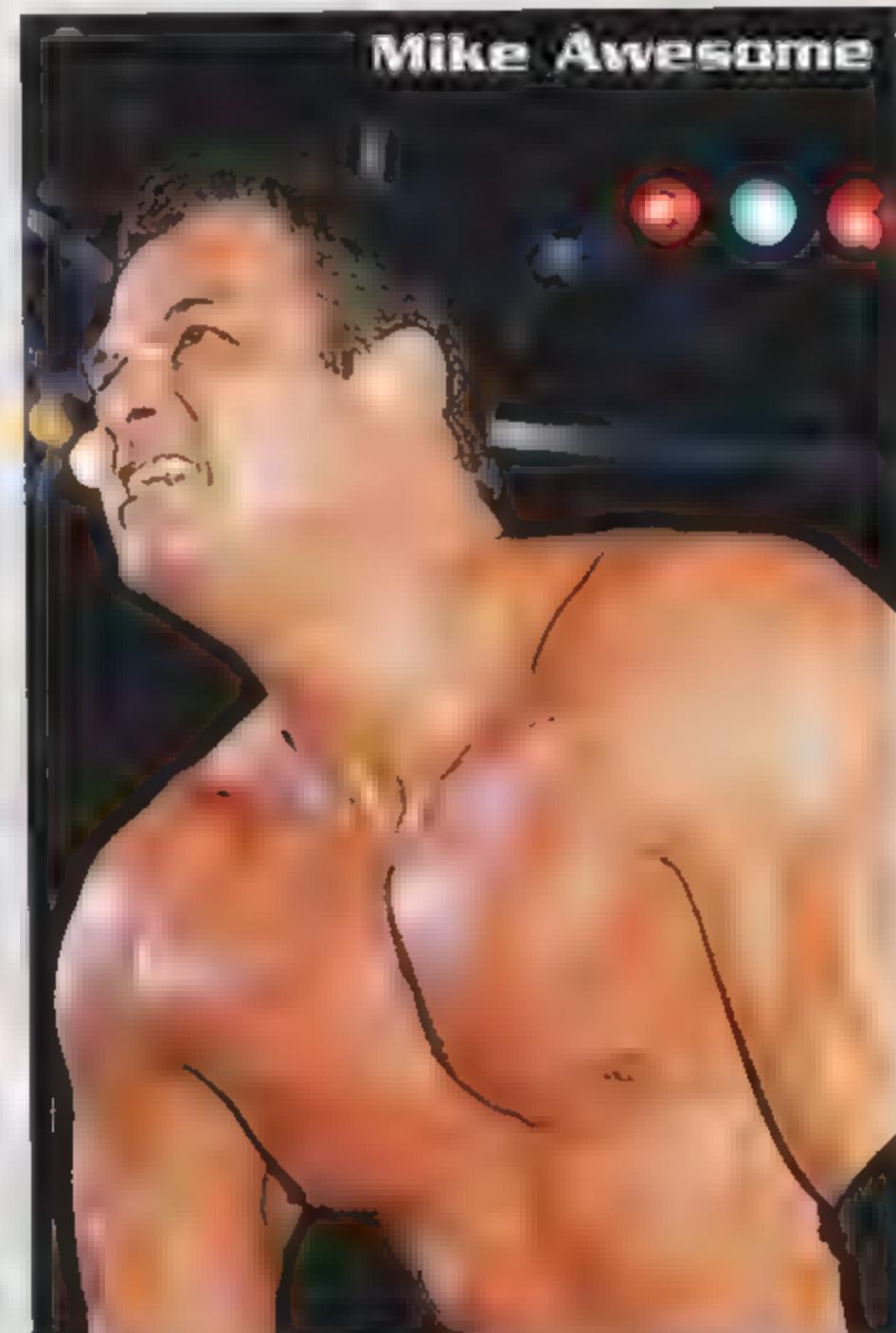
1. I really enjoyed "Braveheart." It's the story of the underdog who fought for his rights.
2. Outback Steakhouse. You can get good food that's somewhat cheap.

Elix Skipper

1. "Fatal Attraction." It was off the hook and very entertaining.
2. Anywhere I can get grilled chicken.

Shane Helms

1. "Unforgiven." It's really a character-driven movie. Clint Eastwood is the man.
2. Outback Steakhouse. I like the shrimp on the barbie. Usually I hate seafood, but that shrimp is great.



Genius and Insanity Revisited



By Tony Schiavone



By Scott Hudson

One of my passing fancies is being a James Bond nut. I have read all of the books and short stories about 007, and my video collection includes all 21 Bond films.

Why am I boring you with a look at my personal life? It's because a scene in the Bond film "Tomorrow Never Dies" inspired me to write another in my series of columns examining the fine line between genius and insanity. There's a line in the film spoken by international media baron and all-around bad guy Elliot Carver that goes like this: "The distance between insanity and genius is measured only by success."

With that line fresh in my mind, I've added a new wrinkle to my observations on genius and insanity. The first half of the column is not intended to disparage anyone. It's actually meant to point out the successful (Genius) and the person next in line to reach that success (Insanity). Remember, many of the following "geniuses" were probably considered



Dusty Rhodes is one "genius" that can never be duplicated.

insane a few years ago. The second part is in a similar vein as my columns, where Genius and Insanity are more literal.

AIRWAVES

Growing up in the Northeast, young Chris Klucarits, better known as WCW's Kanyon, dreamed of becoming a professional wrestler.

Eventually, he started training and paid his dues on the independent circuit until a meeting with WCW wrestler Marc Mero, then known as Johnny B. Badd, changed his life. Kanyon's technically sound work in the ring, combined with a good word from Mero, led to a stint as a WCW enhancement performer (one of the guys brought in to make the pushed talent look good) in 1994. It was in this role that Kanyon caught the eye of Diamond Dallas Page, thus beginning a relationship that would drastically change the path of both men's careers.

Page saw Kanyon as a hardworking and talented man who had the size and attitude to make it in WCW. Kanyon and Page became fast friends, with Page imparting the wisdom only a veteran at the top can provide. Kanyon continued his enhancement role until his first

break came as one of the tag team Men at Work. Despite his construction workers, however, the pairing of Kanyon and Mark Starr never took off.

Page advised Kanyon to be patient, and the waiting seemingly paid off in 1996. Kanyon was repackaged as Mortis, a masked pitfighter, as part of WCW's venture into a worked hybrid fighting angle. Unfortunately, the fans weren't that interested in the concept, and Kanyon soon jacked a gimmick that would make him a superstar.

In 1998, Kanyon lost the Mortis identity and formed a tag team with Raven. In a good idea that was never fully realized, Kanyon and Raven were portrayed as two rich kids having a good laugh playing brooding slackers.

After watching his protege suffer through missed opportunities and ill-planned gimmicks, Page decided to step in and give Kanyon a hand. Page and Kanyon formed the Jersey Triad with Bam Bam Bigelow in 1999 and quickly won the WCW tag-team title. Kanyon,

Kanyon Redefines Ingratitude

Part One

Genius: Ric Flair.

Insanity: Mike Sanders.

Genius: Mike Tenay.

Insanity: Jeremy Borash.

Genius: The Steiner Brothers.

Insanity: Sean O'Haire and Chuck Palumbo.

Genius: Billy Kidman and Rey Mysterio Jr.

Insanity: The Jung Dragons.

Genius: David Letterman.

Insanity: Scott Hudson (You don't realize how funny Hudson is until you travel with him).

Genius: Rick Reilly, Sports Illustrated

Insanity: Kevin Eck, WCW MAGAZINE

Genius: Michael Buffer.

Insanity: David Penzer (Exception to be made here: Penzer really is insane).

Genius: Rick Rude (rest in peace).

Insanity: Shawn Stasiak.

Genius: Dusty Rhodes

Insanity: There will never be another one like him, so we need to leave this blank.

Genius: Justin Timberlake, 'N Sync

Insanity: Evan Karagias.

Part Two

Genius: Bob Ryder of WCW Live!

Insanity: Just about everyone else.

Genius: The dancing of Nitro Girl Naughty-A.

Insanity: The fact they won't let her leave on the broadcast table anymore.

Genius: Wrestling in Australia.

Insanity: The 15-hour plane trip to get there.

Genius: Deciding to drive three hours to get back to Atlanta after the Huntsville, Alabama, Nitro.

Insanity: Putting Tenay and Hudson in the same car.

Genius: The purchase of WCW.

Insanity: Flair thinking the new boss-

es will agree with what he is doing.

Genius: Being a viable and hard-working member of WCW for the past 10 years.

Insanity: Being a viable and hard-working member of WCW for the past 10 years.

Genius: Diamond Dallas Page.

Insanity: Anyone who thinks he is not worth his weight in gold.

Genius: WCW Live! on wcw.com.

Insanity: Allowing Disqo on the show.

Genius: Developing a WCW cruiser-weight tag-team division.

Insanity: Taking so long to do it.

Genius: Goldberg.

Insanity: Not letting him wrestle on WCW TV.

Genius: Kevin Nash.

Insanity: See previous insanity. ♦

Contact Tony Schiavone by e-mail at nitro.tony@turner.com



Kanyon thanked Page for all his friendship and help by stabbing him in the back.

the kid from Jersey with stars in his eyes, had won a world title. And he knew he had Page to thank for playing a vital role in his success.

Fast forward to last May at Namboree. In a triple-tier world title match between Page, Jeff Jarrett and actor David Arquette, Kanyon climbed 20 feet to the first level of the monstrous structure to assist Page when Mike Awesome interfered. Awesome, however, overpowered Kanyon and hurled him off the cage to the ramp below. With a sickening thud, Kanyon shattered the ramp and lay in a crumpled heap.

Weeks in intensive care followed for Kanyon, as Page held vigil at his friend's bedside. Kanyon eventually recovered enough to begin life in a wheelchair. Unbeknownst to Page,

though, Kanyon was growing tired of the constant mothering by DDP. It all came to a head at the Great American Bash in June, when Kanyon sprung from his wheelchair and attacked Page.

This betrayal, along with the split with his beautiful wife Kimberly, led to Page leaving WCW for several months. During his absence, Kanyon took over Page's gimmick, including his music and patented Diamond Cutter finisher.

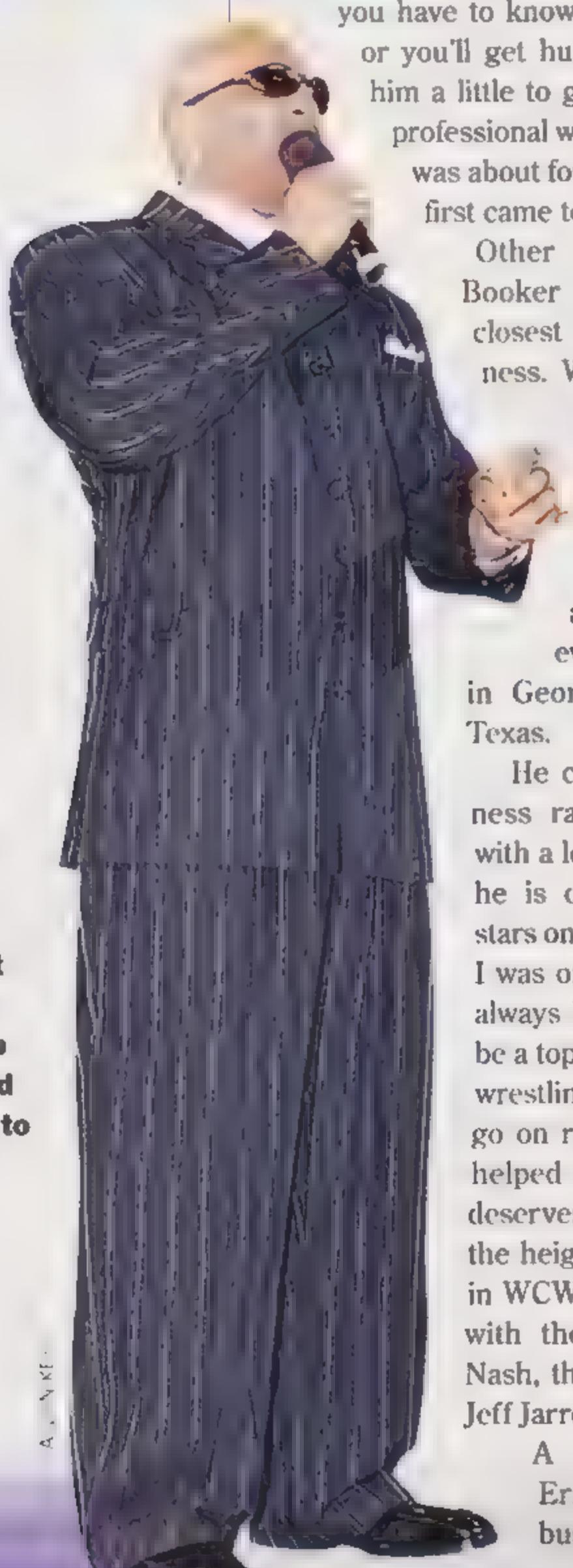
When Page returned to WCW, he had eyes only for Kanyon. In February, Page inflicted punishment on Kanyon with a brutal match at SuperBrawl and a decisive victory on Nitro. But as the battles between the two former friends ebb and they concentrate on other opponents, rest assured, the war will require only the tiniest spark to flame up again. ♦

Contact Scott Hudson by e-mail at nitro.scott@turner.com

The Cat Has Earned His Stripes in WCW



By Stevie Ray



Miller's gift of gab and stylish garb have helped propel him to the top.

Ernest "The Cat" Miller burst onto the wrestling scene straight out of the karate world. A lot of us used to rib Ernest. We'd say things like, "This ain't karate. This ain't the 'Karate Kid,' and nobody around here is Mr. Miyagi. Out here, you have to know what you're doing or you'll get hurt." We just ribbed him a little to get him used to the professional wrestling business. It was about four years ago that he first came to WCW.

Other than my brother Booker T., Ernest is my closest friend in this business. We've done a lot of things together, and I try my best to show him the ropes. We talk to each other just about every day, even though he lives in Georgia and I live in Texas.

He came into this business raw and green but with a lot of potential. Now, he is one of our biggest stars on Nitro and Thunder. I was one of the guys who always knew Ernest would be a top star in professional wrestling, and I think he'll go on record saying that I helped him. But he deserves all of the credit for the heights he has reached in WCW. He is right on top with the guys like Kevin Nash, the Steiner Brothers, Jeff Jarrett and Booker T.

A lot of people say Ernest got into this business because he

was a friend of this guy or he knew that guy. But when you break it down, that's how about 80 percent of the guys in this business got into it. Somebody can give you a break, but it's up to you to take the ball and run with it. That's what Ernest has done. He has adjusted to this business, and he has a wit like no other. He is the most entertaining person on WCW television, and I love watching him week after week. I don't care how down I am or how sad I am, when I turn on the television and Ernest is on, brother, he brings a smile to my face.

Let's get back to his karate skills for a moment. Ernest has a martial arts background—that's no gimmick. The guy was a three-time world karate champion (he says it more than anybody would care to hear, but that's just Ernest). His credentials speak for themselves. He is an athlete that everybody in the wrestling and karate communities can be proud of. What can't this guy do? The sky is the limit for Ernest if he wants it.

Sometimes things in professional wrestling take a drastic turn. A couple years ago, Ernest seriously injured his knee. But I saw him work diligently to fight back from that injury because he was determined to be one of the top guys in wrestling.

It may surprise some fans that I'm saying such nice things about Ernest, considering some of the shots I used to take at him when I was commentating on television. I used to say that maybe he had been sitting behind the commissioner's desk too long or maybe he'd been eating at Joe's Chicken and Waffles too much, and that he had gained a little weight and was a little out of shape. But I was just teasing him.

Ernest is a proud man, a martial artist and, more importantly, he's my friend until the end. He is one of WCW's finest. ♦

Contact Stevie Ray by e-mail at stevieray@turner.com



Freeze II Frame Flashback

Prepare for liftoff: Hulk Hogan launches Ric Flair during a Clash of Champions bout in January 1996

Steiner May Be the Best of the Best



By Mike Tenay



Steiner's impressive credentials speak for themselves.

Maybe the most important factor when it comes to representing an organization as its world heavyweight champion is believability. WCW world champion "Big Poppa Pump" Scott Steiner brings believability to the ring every time he steps between the ropes. From his amateur background at the University of Michigan to his tag-team accomplishments with brother Rick, Steiner has enjoyed success on every level. A reign as world champion was inevitable.

Making comparisons to previous WCW champions is natural, but in the case of Steiner, it's an extremely difficult thing to do. Bret Hart's excellence of execution made him the best champion there ever was from a technical standpoint. Sting combined his vast wrestling skills with a charismatic personality that made him arguably the most popular champion. Ric Flair's flair for the dramatic and his unmatched ability behind the microphone made him the champion who had the best matches.

Hulk Hogan's public image made him the most recognizable WCW titleholder. Diamond Dallas Page has to be credited as the hardest-working WCW champion. Kevin Nash's "Big Sexy" persona allows him to claim the ranking as the coolest man ever to wear the WCW gold. And when it comes to chiseled physiques, Lex Luger gets the nod as the WCW champ with the best body.

But who can match Steiner when it comes to bringing everything together? The intimidating presence, the massive physique and the all-important credibility factor?

While many of the past champions have impres-



Goldberg is the only former champion in the same league as Steiner.

sive resumes, only one man can match Steiner. That man is Bill Goldberg. Intimidation? Check. Physical appearance? Double check. Credibility? Triple check.

Goldberg and Steiner battled at Fall Brawl 2000 in a match so memorable that WCW MAGAZINE selected it as the Match of the Year. Even Steiner has publicly acknowledged that the war against Goldberg was the most physical match he's ever been involved in. Goldberg was Steiner's equal in that unforgettable no-disqualification match until outside interference and a beating from a lead pipe left Goldberg unconscious.

As the calendar turned to March, Goldberg's future with WCW remained in doubt. For the long-term future of the company, Goldberg's return may be the only obstacle standing between "Big Poppa Pump" and total domination of the WCW world heavyweight championship picture. ♦

Contact Mike Tenay by e-mail at professor@turner.com



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Nitro Girls Have All the Right Moves



By
Madusa

The Nitro Girls keep the audience fired up during breaks at Nitro and Thunder.

Is there really a major concern because most of the female personalities in WCW no longer are with the company? I admit that it was surprising to see so many of them depart, but it was long overdue.

We have room for women on the WCW roster, but I must agree that 12 women—or whatever the number was—is just too much. A few women on the scene is good, but when you have too many, none of them get over. The problem also was that most of them didn't wrestle.

The Nitro Girls, on the other hand, are a real commodity. I like them because they add a whole other dimension to the WCW experience. They're very talented and they all look great. I remember seeing them practice at every Nitro—and I'm sure they practice other days as well—and they really busted their butts.

There's more to the Nitro Girls than pretty faces and sexy bodies, though. The girls

all are educated and are quite well-rounded young women. Although they don't appear on televised Nitrros or Thunders at the moment, they are fine assets for the company. In addition to the promotional work they do for WCW, the Nitro Girls are at every Nitro/Thunder event. During commercial breaks, they keep the crowd's energy going by entertaining the fans with their hot dance routines.

I really like the fact the Nitro Girls add and subtract members from time to time—it keeps them fresh and new. Most of all, I like the costumes they wear. These girls truly have looks and talent, so enjoy, boys. It sure beats guys up on stage singing "YMCA."

• • •

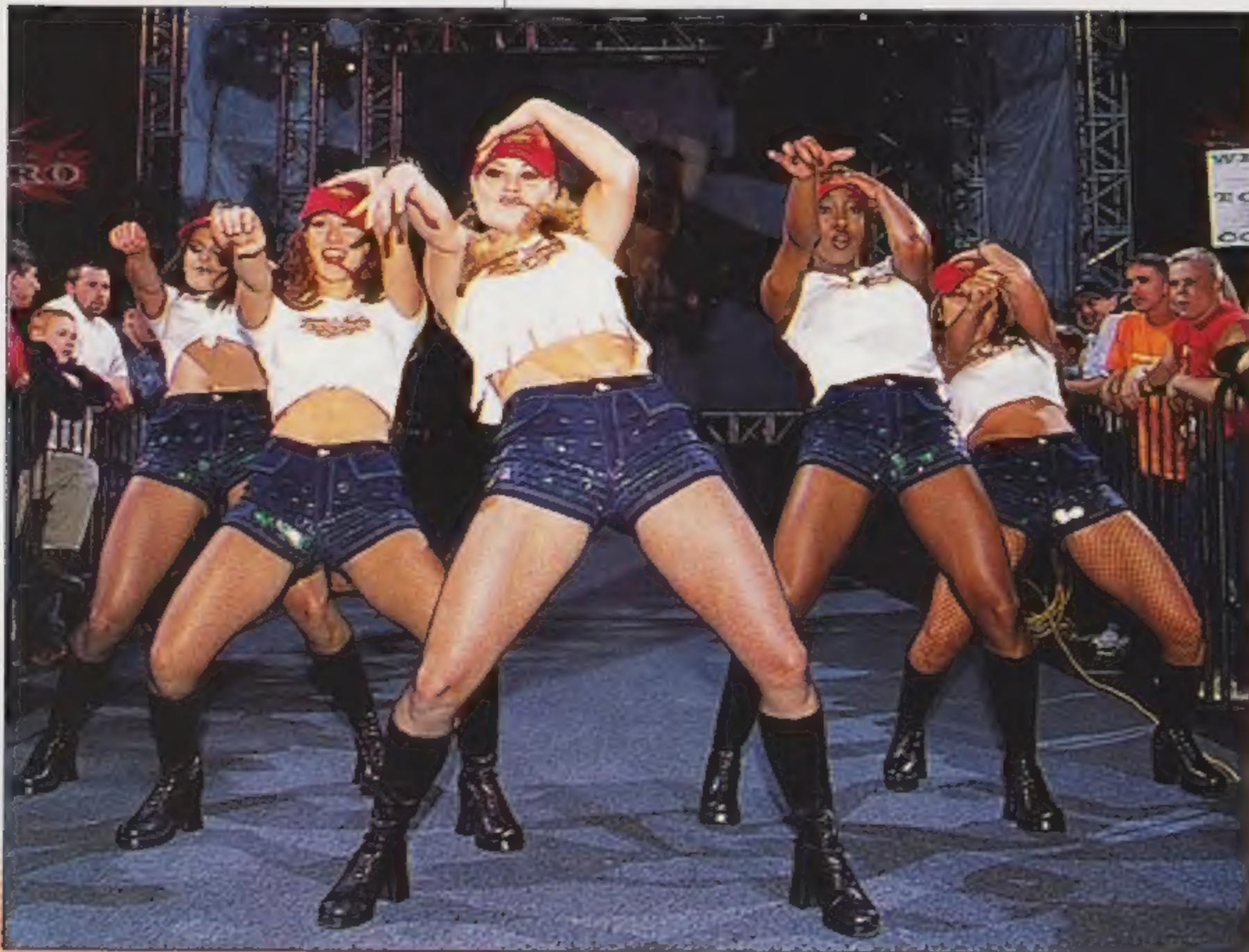
I'm very excited to introduce my clothing line of sports apparel. The line is called "Bend The Rules," because bending the rules is my middle name. You can check it out on madusa.com or ushrsa.com. There also is a bunch of new Madusa merchandise out, including a monster truck stuffed pillow, so now you all can sleep with Madusa—only in your dreams, boys. There are some great-looking t-shirts as well. If you buy anything through madusa.com, you'll get them autographed.

• • •

I have received a lot of e-mail and positive feedback on this column, for which I thank you all. I hope to find time to respond to some of my mail after the monster truck season ends. Next month, I will write about my experience in the monster truck finals in Las Vegas, which you can watch on pay-per-view television.

Until then, keep slammin'. ♦

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